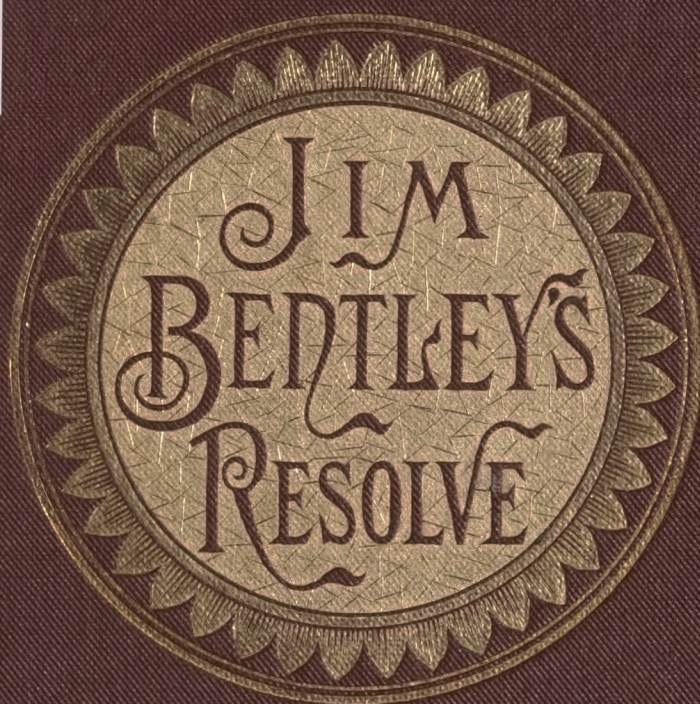


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JIM BENTLEY'S RESOLVE.

BY

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AUTHOR OF "SANDY'S FAITH."



AMERICAN TRACT SOCIETY,

150 NASSAU STREET, NEW YORK.

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Preface.

IT has been the author's object, in writing this story, to recommend two things highly essential to happiness even in this life, and indispensable as regards the life to come, namely: temperance and religion. It has been her intention to show that they give character and worth to the ignorant as well as the learned, and to prove that without them life is a failure in any circumstances. She has had another object in view also, which is to do something to refute the terrible delusion of most bad men—that they will in some way, even against their will, by some strange, transforming process, be saved at last. True, outrageous sinners may be saved, and at the eleventh hour, but not without sincere contrition for past offences, and faith in Him whose blood alone has power to blot out sin. And how many die without giving any satisfactory evidence of either!

That the little book may accomplish some good, is the ardent wish of

THE AUTHOR.

JIM BENTLEY'S RESOLVE.

CHAPTER I.

IN a small wood-colored house on the outskirts of a village in Northern New York lived a family named Bentley. This family consisted of father, mother, a son of fifteen years, and a little daughter of five. At the time when our story commences a thick gloom enveloped the household. For many years a shadow had been deepening over the once sunny home. From being a moderate drinker, the husband and father had gradually become a confirmed inebriate. Poverty, like an armed man, had entered the house and taken possession of it. Bentley was now on his deathbed. Prematurely old, his vital-

ity sapped by his excesses, his mind gnawed by remorse, he was already suffering the penalty of his transgressions. He knew his end was near; he saw no hope for himself; but for those belonging to him, who had not partaken of his sin and folly, he predicted a brighter future.

Mrs. Bentley was a woman of much refinement and of fervent piety. She trained her children in the fear of the Lord, and constantly committed them to his keeping, earnestly praying that they might not be overcome by temptation. She had vainly striven against the demon of intemperance that had invaded her peaceful home, and now, when her husband was helpless and hopeless, she ministered to his wants with the utmost patience and tenderness.

One morning, as Mrs. Bentley was engaged in her accustomed duties, she observed that her husband was gazing intently at her; finally he spoke.

“Sarah, some good will yet come to you. It cannot be otherwise. Your God is a just God, and his justice will not let you suffer always on account of my sin. I shall pass away; then you will not be drawn downwards contrary to your inclinations.”

He ceased speaking. The pale, tearful face of his wife turned towards him, while her fingers mechanically curled the fair hair of their little Ella. She tried to speak, but her utterance was choked. These unexpected remarks of her husband had struck a chord whose vibrations reached her inmost heart. For years he had manifested but little tenderness in his words or actions; for intemperance destroys all the finer nature of a man, and leaves but a withered, degraded wreck of his former self.

“Can this be an indication of a healthier tone of mind, or remaining kindness of heart?” thought Mrs. Bentley.

“Where is Jim?” he at length asked.

"He went out this morning to look for work," she replied.

"What work does the boy expect to find?"

"I don't know. He seemed full of confidence and courage, and said that God would help him to find employment, if only for my sake."

"There it is. I suppose little Ella there knows that all the good must be expected through you, while all the evil and misery have been brought by me. Sissy, father has been a bad, naughty man, has n't he?"

"I don't know; I don't think so," the child answered in a frightened way. "I know who *is* a naughty man," she said, brightening; "that old tavern man. Anyway, I don't like him; 'cause Katy Roberts said to me the other day when he went past, 'There goes the man that's got all your father's money.' Did he get into our house and steal our money before I could remem-

ber? I never saw much money here, only pennies."

"Hush, little one," said the mother.

Bentley groaned, drew the bedclothes over his face, and was silent for a long time. When he removed the covering there was a look of mingled grief and revenge on his countenance.

"Send for Turner," said he; "I want to curse him before I die."

"O John, do n't! You must not get into a passion and waste your strength so. Perhaps you will yet get better and undo all the wrong you have done."

"Undo all the wrong I've done! Then I must needs bring the dead back to life, since the scarlet-fever robbed you of your children because they were John Bentley's; for the doctor, thinking he would get no pay, or that they would be better out of the world, neglected them, and Jim only got through with the skin of his teeth. I remember,

Sarah. I was sober at that time; but I was powerless in the meshes I had drawn around myself; and while you were yet weak and worn with watching, and suffering from the bereavement still so fresh, little Ella came to us; and I, wretch that I was, left you to be cared for by strangers. God bless Priscilla Slocum for the care she gave you, if such a poor wretch's prayers get higher than his head. Undo all I have done! when you at thirty-five look more like fifty; when I have made my son almost hate me; when every article worth taking has been dragged away and sold, and nothing is left but a few pieces of broken furniture! Do n't you think I've had to see and feel since I've been lying here? No, I can never undo the wrong I have done; but let me have the satisfaction of cursing Turner. I must curse him to his face. I shall burst if I cannot."

The wife went to the bedside and placed her hand on her husband's forehead, where

the great blue veins stood out almost to bursting.

"John, you must not; you must try to compose yourself—for my sake."

"*For your sake!*" he replied bitterly. "I have done so much for your sake!"

His wife burst into tears. Little Ella clung to her mother's dress and wept for sympathy.

"Must Turner then go uncursed?" he said presently, in a more subdued tone.

"He cannot," his wife found voice to say, "for God has pronounced a curse on him who putteth the bottle to his neighbor's lips."

"Well, then," he said, "Turner is in for it; let him go."

"John," she said, "do you think it is well to nurse your anger, even towards him?"

"Perhaps not," he replied, after a short pause, "for if I had not been a fool, an infernal fool, he could not have trapped me."

"No one is strong in his own strength, John, and therefore we should shun temptation."

"Yes; I remember that with the forbearance of a saint you often told me that, before I had got so far off the track; and much thanks you got for your trouble. When I contrast your looks this morning with what they were sixteen years ago, I am almost crazed. Well, if you will not let me send for Turner, I will do something very different. I will see if I cannot do one good deed yet: I will send for some of my neighbors who are going the same way I went, and warn them. I may prevent some misery in other homes."

"Well, it will be unpleasant for me," she said, "and too much for your strength, I fear; but if you feel it to be your duty, I will not object."

CHAPTER II.

TIME passes even in the abodes of wretchedness, and the long day finally closed. As the sun disappeared a buoyant step was heard, and Jim Bentley sprang in, his face glowing with satisfaction.

“Did n’t I tell you, mother!” he exclaimed.

“What is it, my son?”

“I told you I should be prospered to-day, and I have been. What do you suppose I found? A dollar-bill right in the road before me! It was all crumpled up, and I did not know what it was; but something made me look at it; perhaps it was Providence,” he added in a low tone.

“How did it look?” asked Ella.

“Here it is; see for yourself,” said he, drawing it from his pocket. “When you have seen it, hand it to mother. Now, Puss,

do n't interrupt me again; I want to go on with my story. Well, I took it over to Deacon Slocum's, for I did n't know that it would be right for me to keep it."

This Deacon Slocum was, by the way, a very excellent man, and much esteemed by all who knew him. Actively pious, he was always ready to extend a helping hand to all who stood in need. His educational advantages, so far as books were concerned, had been small, and his manner of speaking showed him to be a Yankee of the old stamp; but in the school of life and grace he had been no dull scholar, and his conversation was sensible and wholesome. Mrs. Slocum was so much like her husband in many respects, that one often seemed an echo of the other. They had one daughter, thirteen years old, a fine-looking, sweet-tempered child, and a great comfort to her parents. They lived in harmony, possessing both the will and the means to do good.

So it was not strange that Jim went to the deacon for advice. He told him that he was seeking employment, and mentioned that he had found a dollar, stating his scruples about keeping it.

“Keep it? Yes, keep it,” said the deacon. “One bill lying in the road so, it’s no ways likely you’d find the right owner. Half a dozen might claim it if you said anything about it, and I guess nobody needs it more’n you do.”

“Do you think I can buy an axe with a dollar?” asked Jim.

“See here now; I’ve got through clearing up that timbered land, and I do n’t want so many axes. S’pose you take one of mine. I’ve got a first-rate axe I’ll let you have; it has n’t been used much, either.”

“Would you sell it for a dollar?” asked Jim.

“La!” said he, “I do n’t want your money. Take the axe and welcome, Jim. Did you

think of chopping more 'n you have to do at home?"

"Yes; I would like to chop for some of the neighbors, if I could get a chance."

"Then you need n't go any farther, for I've got all my summer's wood to chop, and the spring work coming on. If you want a job I can give you one. What do you say to it?"

"I will take it, and be glad to get it," said Jim; and he went to work.

When night came the deacon brought three shillings to Jim, saying, "Maybe it's a little more than it's worth; you chop like a beginner; but you've got the right stuff in you, and it'll all be right by-and-by. Every day you'll fetch up a little, and you'll soon do a good day's work. Now take these fresh eggs to your mother. I'd like to give you as many every night, you look kind o' puny; I guess you grow too fast; but Priscilla uses a terrible sight of eggs, a terrible sight."

Jim related the day's experience, mimicking the tone and manner of the deacon.

"Jim, my boy," said his father.

"Well, sir," said Jim.

"Come here and look me in the face, for I want to tell you something you must never forget. Do not mimic people. I was always in demand with the wrong class, on account of my power of mimicry. You know the rest. It had much to do with my ruin."

"Well, then, father, I solemnly promise to drop it. I have resolved never to follow any bad example, but to shun everything that will unfit me to support my mother."

"That is good talk, boy; but the strength of Another is what you need. Your mother will tell you about that; such words don't come well from me. There is one thing I want you to do. I am anxious to warn those men you have seen me with so often. I want you to go and ask all of them to come here."

Seeing the boy hesitate, he added in a pleading tone, "Tell them to-night, Jimmy, for my time is short."

"All right," said the boy, and he hurried out, his eyes filling with tears, for to the young heart the near approach of death in any form is terrible.

CHAPTER III.

AFTER an hour Jim returned and reported that they would all come.

"Will they?" said the father; "I feared they would not."

"They would not promise at first," said Jim. "They laughed, and wanted to know if you had turned preacher."

He had scarcely ceased speaking when there was an irregular, uncertain knock at the door. Jim opened it. Higgins, the ring-leader of the set, entered, followed by the others. Bentley extended his hand, which each one took in turn. Jim offered the three chairs, which were but half enough for the visitors. Three seated themselves, and the other three leaned against the wall, folded their arms, and looked hard at the sick man, not knowing what to think or say. Mrs. Bent-

ley and Ella withdrew to a room still more comfortless. Higgins, gaining confidence by Bentley's seeming embarrassment, began :

"Well, Bentley, I thought you wanted to preach to us. Why don't you begin? Where is your sermon?"

"Look around and read my sermon. Look at everything."

One of the men laughed a coarse laugh and said, "There's precious little to look at."

"That is it precisely," said Bentley. "How many of you remember when I settled here sixteen years ago?"

"I do," and "I do," came from one and another until nearly every one answered in the affirmative.

"Then let *Change* be the text."

"Yes; there is change, and too much of it," said Chester Crawford, the best-hearted man of them all. "And, for one, this warning shall not be lost on me. I caught sight of Mrs. Bentley as she left the room, and she

is but the shadow of her former self. I remember her when there was not a likelier-looking lady to be found. I remember, too, when no cottage had a prettier look than this one; and that is not all I remember; I remember when I had a more comfortable home myself—and I wish old Turner joy with all the money he gets from me after this.”

“But,” said Higgins, “I want to hear what Bentley has to say.”

“Well,” said Bentley, “I would like you, my misguided friends, to escape some of the misery I now feel. I would like you to stop in your course, so that when you come to your last sickness you will have a few pleasant years to look back upon. I do not want any one of you to be eaten with remorse as I am; to remember that he has been a source of terror to every member of his family, through the violence he has used towards them; that he has pawned every article of furniture, even his wife’s heirlooms; that he has stripped the

curtains from the windows and the blankets from his children's beds ; that he has stolen his wife's clothing, even when furnished by her relatives, and the wedding dress had not enough of sacredness to exempt it from the fate of whatever was found salable."

"Bentley, stop," said Crawford. "Higgins, you ought not to have drawn him out so. You will have him dying on our hands while we stand here."

For Bentley had been so exercised all day that he had little strength left, and his efforts to reform his companions by the rehearsal of his own shame and degradation soon exhausted him. Jim, who had withdrawn into the farthest corner of the room, where his tears could flow unobserved, now came forward, alarmed at the remark of Crawford.

"Jim, my boy, forgive your father," whispered the unhappy man.

"Yes, O yes," said the boy, seizing the long, thin hand and carrying it to his lips, in

his earnestness to manifest his forgiveness, while tears rained from his eyes.

That was too much for Crawford; he wept too; and in a little while scarcely a dry eye was in the room.

“Ah, my boy,” said the father, “that hand you kissed has dealt you many an undeserved blow.”

“Never mind that now,” sobbed the boy.

“If I could only be as sure of God’s forgiveness,” said Bentley, turning to his companions; “but that I do not hope for.”

“Father,” faltered the boy, “God is kinder than I am.”

“Ah! my son, he is wiser than to let his laws be broken with impunity, and juster than to forgive one who has sinned long years against light and knowledge, against a wife’s prayers and entreaties, and, above all, has looked lightly on the offers of mercy through his divine Son.”

Just here Mrs. Bentley appeared, and

quickly observing the effect of the prolonged interview upon her husband, she said in a tremulous voice, "Gentlemen, had you not better leave us? I fear this excitement will prove an injury to my husband."

"Yes, let them go, now that I know they can still weep at the misery of a drunkard's family," said Bentley.

CHAPTER IV.

"Now, not a man of us for the tavern to-night," said one of the number as soon as they were out of hearing.

"Who made you spokesman for us all?" said Higgins.

"Well," remarked a third, "if any one of us goes there to-night, after what we have seen and heard, the devil will be sure enough of him."

"Say, Crawford, are you going to stick to what you said at Bentley's?" asked a fourth.

"Of course he wont," said Higgins.

"Of course he *will*," said Crawford, turning in the direction of his own home, as every man of them did but Higgins.

Crawford reached home before his wife retired. She was in the habit of working

late at night. Her slender means added to her daily labor the nightly task of mending and making over clothing for her family.

Crawford had married later in life than Bentley, and his wife was much younger than himself. But traces of care and disappointment were but too apparent on her sunken face. She was experiencing what Mrs. Bentley had passed through years before—when hope, beset with many a fear, still struggled for a place in her bosom. Many a time, when Mrs. Crawford had worked far into the night, did she stay her busy fingers and listen for the wished-for, yet dreaded footsteps, while the throbbing of her poor, torn heart was all she heard; or she rose and, with noiseless tread, lest she should be startled at the sound of her own footfall, went to the door and vainly peered into the darkness, then turned to look at her sleeping little ones, and sitting down again wept herself into calmness.

Ah! they who are merry over the wine-cup little think what aching hearts are waiting for them at their homes; little do they realize how sad their case is when love can no longer win back their straying feet; when a tap on the shoulder, with a "Come along," from a companion in sin, is more persuasive than the tears and entreaties of a wife.

Somewhat earlier than usual, Crawford entered his own door and stood before his wife. She looked up with a quiet, searching glance, expecting the old state of things; but he stood before her with such a pitying look on his sober face that she uttered a cry of joy and threw herself into his arms.

"Poor little Nellie," he said, trying to smooth out the lines of care too early stamped on her forehead; "what an abused little woman it is."

Then, like a child that is hurt, but does not cry until pitied, she burst into tears. He drew her to a seat, saying, "There, stop cry-

ing, like a brave little body as you are, and I will tell you something. I have seen Bentley."

"Well?"

"Well, he is about to fill a drunkard's grave."

"That is not strange."

"No," he replied with a shudder. "You mean," he continued, "that it is but the natural ending to the course he has been pursuing."

She bowed assent, and he continued.

"I tremble to think where I have been standing; Bentley has just shown me where it was."

"Have you been with him?"

"Been at his house. He sent for me and some others."

"How came he to send for you?"

"Oh, you don't know all; nor need you, now. Bentley was a waggish, jolly fellow, and on that account he often got in with

those not so far on the road to ruin as himself, notwithstanding his tatters. He never kept an article of clothing that could procure him the liquor he craved. Well, he sent for us, and called our attention to the change in himself and in his home ; and he has opened the eyes of at least one man, for I call God to witness that not another drop of the dangerous stuff that has wrought so much ruin shall ever pass my lips."

"God help you, Chester," said his wife fervently.

CHAPTER V.

THE morning found Bentley much worse. Jim went over to Deacon Slocum's to tell him that, on account of his father's condition, he could not work that day.

"Priscilla," said the deacon to his wife, "you just go over there and see if you can't do something for them."

Jim turned to go home.

"Wait for me, Jim," said Mrs. Slocum. "It wont take me more'n three minutes to get ready."

Presently she came from the pantry, bringing a large basket, which she set down by the door; then she took off her apron, and, putting on a shawl and a stiffly starched sun-bonnet, she gave Jim the basket, saying, "Carry this for me, wont you?"

Jim was embarrassed, and looked as if he

wanted to object; for thus far his own earnings and a small stated allowance secretly remitted by his uncle had kept the family from eating the bread of charity. Jim had been intrusted with this secret for a long time; but little Ella saw only the pennies, lest her busy little tongue should in some way make the fact known to her father.

"Your ma's got no time to bake when your pa is so poorly," said Mrs. Slocum, comprehending Jim's look.

Thus reassured, Jim took up the basket, and the two soon reached the abode of the Bentleys.

That Bentley's end was near was at once apparent to the practised eye of Priscilla Slocum. He was asleep, but the shadow of death was on his face. Mrs. Slocum said nothing beyond a whispered greeting, but quietly took the basket into the pantry. Mrs. Bentley followed her.

"His time is short, is it not?" she asked.

"I think so," replied Mrs. Slocum.

Mrs. Bentley became still paler, and caught at the door for support.

"See here, Mrs. Bentley," whispered Mrs. Slocum, "you go and sit right down. You look as if you had n't slept a wink all last night."

"I did not, nor have I slept much for several nights."

"Well, you just sit right down, and let me take hold of the work."

"Thank you, but there is not much to be done; and if there were, there is nothing to do it with. You would not know how to take hold of work in my house."

"Well, I'll just slip away a little while, and be right back."

Mrs. Bentley looked distressed. Her neighbor, understanding the cause, added, "There wont be any change before night, I reckon."

Home went Mrs. Slocum, faster than she

had come, for she was on an errand of love and mercy. On reaching home she went immediately to the back door and called, "Jonathan! Jonathan!"

"Well," said the deacon as he made his appearance at the barn door.

"Will you harness up old Pete to the long-boxed wagon? I want to use him."

"Well."

In due time old Pete stood before the door.

"Come in, Jonathan," called out his wife.

Jonathan carefully wiped his boots on the husk mat and came in.

"Well?" This was his almost unvarying answer to his wife's calls and propositions.

"See here, Jonathan, we've got more chairs than we need. Now I'd like to take an easy chair to that poor creature that's more dead than alive with sorrow and care. Then I want to take three of those kitchen chairs; there always was too many of 'em in

there. And I want to take a pair of pillows. Seems to me, that man's lying on pillows stuffed with straw. Of course, he's been the cause of it if it is so; but nobody can feel hard toward a dying man. I stood there looking at that man's bed; the quilt is all to pieces; and I got to thinking how nice my new goose-chase quilt would look on that bed, instead of that tattered one. But I thought, 'I've just got it done.' 'Never mind,' whispered a voice in my heart. 'Inasmuch as you have done it'—you know the rest of it, Jonathan; so I came right along home to get it. And Jonathan, I believe I'll take that Boston rocker I've just cushioned, for I'd feel stingy to offer the other if its just the same as giving it to Him, you see. Then I'll pick up some little things I know we wont miss, and they'll be doing good over there. And then you just drive me over 'cross lots, because I don't want anybody peeking into what I'm doing. They might think I was

doing a terrible sight, and 't is n't half enough, according to the way I read the Bible. Jonathan, I s'pose you ought to pray with him; he's got a soul the same as anybody."

Still talking and bustling about, she gathered articles enough to make quite a load, while her husband carried them to the wagon; and, all things being ready, the deacon took up the lines and started.

"Stop, stop a minute. Martha," Mrs. Slocum called to her daughter, "you get those curtains you ironed yesterday. I'll get you some longer ones."

While Martha was looking up the curtains, her mother remarked, "Maybe that's giving what we don't value much. I s'pose the right way to give is to give till you feel it a little. But Martha ought to have the new ones, too, for she's a good girl and works hard. She says other folks have 'em come clear down to the floor. That's right, Martha," taking the curtains from her hand.

"Now, get the dinner as well as you can. See that the potatoes do n't boil to pieces, and do n't fry your eggs too hard."

"Get along, Pete," said the deacon, and away the kind couple went as fast as the unsettled roads would permit.

They found Bentley sleeping still, and no perceptible change in him. No one thought best to arouse him, so the deacon spoke some comforting words to the wife, then set down the things he had brought, and turned his horse's head toward home.

"Jim," said Mrs. Slocum, "help me in with these things." The rocker she took in herself, patted the neat cushion, and motioned to Mrs. Bentley to sit in it.

This unlooked-for kindness started the tears in Mrs. Bentley's eyes. "I have n't had such a chair for ten years," said she, as she sank into it.

Mrs. Slocum arranged the other things she had brought, and did it so quietly that

Mrs. Bentley, in her weariness and drowsiness, did not notice the changes which were taking place around her.

"Now, move that way a little," said Mrs. Slocum, "and I'll spread down this piece of carpet. It'll make the room look more cheerful." And she nearly covered the bare floor with some partially worn, but whole and clean carpeting.

"*You* put this quilt and these pillows on the bed by-and-by," said Mrs. Slocum gently, after she had placed all the other things. She had made a wonderful change in that abode of poverty. White curtains hung at both windows; whole chairs had taken the places of broken ones; the rough pine table had been covered with a cloth; on the table stood a basket of quaint mulberry crockery; and all these things, together with the carpet and the neat bed-quilt, gave the place an air of comfort. Then the presence of a friend so strong and good as Priscilla Slo-

cum took away something from the great trouble that seemed crushing the heart of the suffering woman.

Mrs. Bentley's eyes filled with tears, and it was with difficulty that she could express her gratitude. She felt how precious even human sympathy is in times of darkness.

"Mrs. Slocum, you have the joy of being able to do good," she found voice to say.

As dinner was being prepared, Crawford entered, followed by his family physician. They went together to the bedside.

"No use, Crawford," said the doctor in an undertone. Then turning to Mrs. Bentley, he said, "Madam, do you know that your husband is past help?"

She bowed affirmatively.

"But for yourself," he continued, "something should be done. You are not really ill, but you are greatly overtasked, and may easily become ill. If you will allow me to

prescribe for you, I may help you to gain strength to meet what is before you."

"Thank you," replied she. "Prescribe for me if you think it necessary."

"I should like to speak with Bentley," said Crawford.

"Better not," said the doctor. "He is resting now. His mental excitement has exhausted the little strength he had."

So they took leave without disturbing the sleeper.

After dinner was over, and all were quietly seated in the now comfortable room, the sick man awoke. With perfect consciousness he looked around on all present. Then, with an effort, he beckoned his wife to approach.

"What is it, John?" she said when she had reached the bedside.

"Water."

Tenderly she raised his head, and gave him water. She smoothed his pillow, and

laid him gently down again. He turned his eyes full on his wife, and with feeble voice said, "Sarah, I am going, and without hope. But you have done your duty. What was that Scripture text about sentence against an evil work, that you quoted to me once? I want the minister to take that for his text when I am carried to the church; and I want those six men chosen bearers, so that they will hear that sermon. Do n't forget."

"I will not forget."

Little Ella came to the bedside, saying, "I've been a good girl, papa, and kept still all the morning, so you could sleep."

"Did you, dear?"

"Oh, Jim, papa called me dear."

"Is this the first time?"

"I do n't know. I guess so."

Then seeing that her father was troubled, she said, "I guess you would n't feel bad if you could see what a pretty quilt you've got on your bed, and how many nice things we have."

So she prattled on, every word going like an arrow to her father's heart; for he remembered pretty quilts and spreads and window-curtains, if she did not.

"Do n't talk to papa any more now," said the mother, and she gently drew the child to herself, and held her in a close embrace.

Bentley turned his eyes to Mrs. Slocum. "Oh, I see," said he, as he comprehended who had brought the comforts; "I thank you, Mrs. Slocum, for all you have done for my family."

Mrs. Slocum asked if he had any pain.

"Only in my mind," he answered. "I am soon to appear before that God whom you and my wife have served so long and faithfully. But I shall not have on the wedding-garment. I shall be cast into outer darkness."

"Can't you look to the Saviour, Mr. Bentley?" asked Mrs. Slocum. "God's mer-

cy is great. He 'loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.' "

"I have sinned away my day of grace," said the dying man.

"I want to see my boy," he said, after a pause.

Jim came and stood before him.

"Worship God in sincerity and truth, my son, and remember him in every act of your life. Imitate your mother, and think of me only to shun my sins. I need not give the care of your mother and sister into your charge, for that duty you have long since taken upon yourself, even when it belonged to another. Good-by, my children. Life will be better and brighter for you now. I shall no longer drag you downward. Good-by, my poor, abused wife. May God make you forget the misery I have caused you; and even here may you have many years of comfort. Good-by, Mrs. Slocum. Your labor of love will be rewarded in another world if

not in this. Now let me rest a little. There will be no rest where I am going."

He closed his eyes, and soon fell into a quiet sleep. Just as the sun's last rays fell upon the spring-awakened earth, he ceased to breathe.

CHAPTER VI.

THE needful preparations for Bentley's funeral were made by kindly neighbors; for in that simple country town no professional undertaker had yet established himself. Deacon Slocum and Mr. Crawford were particularly active, and relieved Mrs. Bentley of all anxiety as to ways and means. The circle of mourners was small, consisting of only three, the wife and children of the dead man. Mr. Brown, Mrs. Bentley's brother, had been sent for, but he could not be with his sister until a week later. Bentley had no near relatives; and distant ones are not desirous of claiming relationship with one who is poor and disgraced. Mrs. Bentley felt, more than ever before, that she was cut off from all natural sympathy and friendship.

The funeral service was impressive. The

text startled many an evil-doer as it was read from Ecclesiastes 8:11. "Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil." The sermon was to the living. The dead was scarcely referred to; and Mrs. Bentley was spared the pain of any personal allusion. Tears of sincere sorrow fell from her eyes as the grave closed over him to whom, in the flush of youth and beauty, she had confided her happiness. The John Bentley of other days came before her; and she felt that hers had been a bitter lot. She could not look forward to a blessed reunion, for though her husband had painfully realized the wickedness and folly of his course, and the magnitude of his sin against his wife and children, his heart had seemed deaf to God's offers of mercy, which she had tenderly urged upon him and pleaded for him, and capable of hearing only the threatenings of His just anger against the workers

of iniquity. And without faith in Christ, how could the sinner be cleansed from his sin? Sadly Mrs. Bentley turned from the grave, with tender memories in her heart which for the time silenced recollections of neglect and injury and deepened the anguish of some terrible apprehensions.

The evening after the funeral, Deacon Slocum and his wife sat down to talk over the events of the past few days.

"I am so glad we thought of taking over those things," said Mrs. Slocum. "It really looks comfortable there now, doesn't it?"

"Well, it does, Priscilla, that's a fact; and we are none the worse off for it, either."

"Jonathan, I suspect we're better for it. You always say that what we give in a good cause, and with the right motives, will be a comfort to us for ever."

"So it will, Priscilla, while hoarded wealth will count against us, for in such a case we'd be unprofitable servants."

"I believe we have not done enough yet," said good Mrs. Slocum. "That poor creature is n't comfortable enough yet. I believe I'll invite her over here, and I'll do a little more to make the house cheerful."

So a few days after the funeral Deacon Slocum drove up to Mrs. Bentley's door.

"I have come to take you over to our house, if you will go. Priscilla thinks you're almost worn out, and she wants you to stay a day or two with Martha, and let her come over here. She wants to tinker up the house a little, she and Jim together."

Mrs. Bentley was indeed much worn with all she had passed through, and she needed rest. But she hesitated; she was loath to accept so much kindness. The deacon persisted.

"Now take the little girl and go along over, do. Priscilla will be terribly disappointed if you don't."

Thus importuned, she went. Mrs. Slo-

cum soon made her feel at ease. After the dinner was over, Mrs. Slocum went to help Jim Bentley. The next morning she did the same. Mrs. Bentley wished to return home; but her kind hostess insisted on her remaining at least another day, adding, "It wont hurt you to rest."

At the end of the second day Mrs. Slocum and Jim had wrought wonders. The house had been whitewashed on the outside, two rooms had been papered and painted, and several pieces of furniture added; so that not only the kitchen, but even the sitting-room, was furnished so as to be respectable.

When the work was nearly completed, in walked Turner. Now Mrs. Slocum, pious soul, tried hard to love everybody; but she found, as he made his appearance, that she must fail in regard to him at least. And when he said, "Trouble for nothing, ma'am, trouble for nothing; I intend to foreclose the mortgage," she, to use her own words, "just

boiled over," and replied, "No, you wont, either."

But we will let her relate the interview as she told it to her husband.

"‘You ought to be sued for damages,’ said I, ‘instead of coming along here with any claim on that poor creature’s property. Isn’t it enough that you’ve ruined her husband, soul and body, and got everything away from her that’s worth taking, except the roof over her head? and now you are after that! You ought to be ashamed of yourself! But I guess you and shame had a falling out before you began to take the bread out of children’s mouths for your nasty whiskey,’ said I. Then I said to him, ‘How much is your wonderful mortgage?’ and he said, ‘I ain’t obliged to tell you my business.’ ‘Well,’ said I, ‘there’ll be some one looking after this affair, or I don’t know Jonathan Slocum.’ Jim turned his back, and I could see he was boiling over too. Turner tried to

look as if I had n't said anything to the point, but I knew I had by the way he sneaked off. I told Jim not to tell his mother that Turner had been there, because I knew it would be fixed up some way. I am glad he didn't catch her at home, to worry her just now, poor soul!"

Deacon Slocum was troubled about the mortgage, and did not see what was to be done; but he was determined that something should be done to prevent the foreclosure.

The arrival of Mrs. Bentley's brother gave another phase to the affair.

"I think we can manage it," said her brother. "My sister had money left her by her father; but she could get only the interest of it as long as Bentley lived, for he would have squandered all that came within his reach."

It was found on investigation that the mortgage was but three hundred dollars, and that the money which Mrs. Bentley would

now receive from her father's estate would pay it, and leave a surplus of five hundred dollars. The deacon advised her to take one hundred dollars and buy what they needed, and put the remaining four hundred in the bank. It was thought that the interest of that, with the money that Jim and she could earn, would, with economy, keep them from want. Among the purchases was a cow. As Mrs. Bentley knew how to take care of milk and to make butter, she found this investment a source of profit. She planted flowers about her door, and Jim replaced the broken trellises. The neglected garden once more showed signs of industry and thrift. Currant-bushes were planted along the garden wall, and some young fruit-trees from the deacon's nursery found their way into the old ruined orchard. Before the first summer had far advanced, people in passing remarked, "Who would recognize this place! What a change!"

Comforts began to gather around Mrs. Bentley. Her face, so long unused to smiles, began to wear the look of cheerfulness; and Hope, so long a stranger to her heart, resumed her place with promise of better days. Mrs. Bentley had bought suitable clothing for herself and her children, and went regularly with them to church. She had long been deprived of this privilege. Very pale she looked in her widow's garb; but she felt happy to be able once more to meet God in his sanctuary, and commune with his children. Old friends recognized her, and took her hand in friendly greeting. They had held aloof as much for her sake as their own; for one suffering as she had done does not like to meet curious eyes, or even answer the well-meaning questions of friends.

Mrs. Crawford was one of the first who came to see her. She remembered the occurrence which had changed her husband's course, and she felt herself drawn towards

Mrs. Bentley. They had known a common sorrow, and they felt a mutual sympathy, but each kept silence on a subject so painful to both. Mrs. Crawford's leave-taking was full of unspoken affection, and from that time the two women were friends.

Little Ella attended the village school, and, although well dressed, well behaved, and beloved by the teacher and most of the pupils, she had to suffer much from the small Higginses, who, envious of her respectable appearance, constantly reminded her of that which kind people desired the child to forget.

Jim worked the few acres of land which belonged to his mother, and did more to improve them than his father had ever done. He found time also to work occasionally for his neighbors. He was one of that kind that can find work and do it while others are looking for it.

CHAPTER VII.

HIGGINS' refusal to reform, or even to place himself where he would once more hear the Word of God, was followed by increased dissipation, and the man went down faster than ever. More money went to the tavern, and less into his home. His wife, no longer able to stem the tide of troubles, sank into despondency. A pulmonary disease, from which she had long been suffering, developed rapidly, and soon her children were motherless.

With the mother seemed to die all the good that was in the family. The children, all boys, had been influenced very little by her, owing to the disrespect with which their father treated all her opinions. Only the youngest seemed to possess any of his mother's gentleness. The older boys were idle, ill-

mannered, and profane; they smoked, frequented grog-shops, and were always on the street, ready to fight at the least provocation. The younger ones followed their example, as a matter of course, and there was nothing to check them in their downward career. One relative after another was called to fill the mother's place; but none of them could long put up with the bad conduct of the children, or the scanty allowance for housekeeping. Consequently, the family were repeatedly left to themselves, and father and children were untidy, shabby, and repulsive in appearance. Hence it was that the Higgins children were envious of the Bentleys. They knew they were going down in the scale of respectability, while the Bentleys were going up. The younger boys teased Ella at school; the older ones annoyed Jim on the street, or wherever they chanced to meet him. Tom, the oldest boy, one day placed himself on the corner of the street on purpose to taunt Jim

on his way to church. Jim was passing, dressed as he should be, when Tom called out,

"Oh dear, how mighty fine you are! Seems to me, your style of dress don't resemble your father's."

"Well," replied Jim, "it seems to me yours does resemble your father's, and you bid fair to make a man just like him."

"Do you want to fight?" said Tom.

"Do you?" said Jim.

"Yes."

"Then fight your bad habits. They will keep you employed, I should judge."

The bystanders laughed. Tom was much chagrined. Jim passed on.

As Tom had failed to get Jim to fight and thus disgrace himself, he thought of another plan he hoped would do just as well. He feigned friendliness, and wanted Jim to drink with him. Jim very positively refused. This Tom had expected; but he hoped by

persuasion and ridicule to overcome Jim's scruples. But Jim was immovable.

"I should think, Tom," said he, "that you and I had both seen enough of that sort of thing to try to grow up sober men."

"Bah! one glass wont hurt anybody. You'll grow up a regular muff if you don't do a little more as other fellows do."

"Well, you can call me what you please. I shall never drink. I despise tippling. Besides, I told my father on his deathbed that I never would; and I have promised my mother a hundred times, when I have seen her suffer from the effects of intemperance, that I never would drink intoxicating liquors."

"So the old man made you promise, did he?"

"No, he did not; but I made a resolve in his presence, and I will not drink with you or any one else."

"Well, you are a milk-and-water boy, sure enough! Now go home and tell your mother that Tom Higgins wanted you to drink,

and you resisted the temptation ; then she will kiss and cuddle you, and call you her precious boy."

" Well, Tom, that is just about what she would do ; but if you think you make me ashamed by such talk, you much mistake. I am happy that I have a mother to encourage me when I do right ; but I shall not tell her anything about you. So, if you would enjoy hurting her feelings, I shall disappoint you. And I advise you to turn over a new leaf, and aim at something higher than leading people to ruin."

Tom began to think that Jim was out of his reach. So he held a consultation with some other bad boys, and promised his handsome pocket-knife and the money to buy the liquor, to any one of them who should succeed in getting Jim Bentley intoxicated.

" It's a bargain," said more than one.

So Jim was soon beset in earnest, but he was always firm in his refusal.

“We'll make you drink,” said one.

“If you threatened to tear me limb from limb, I would not drink,” replied Jim.

“Well, you're plucky,” said another, “and I respect pluck wherever I see it. Boys, I think we might be in better business. Let's go on.”

And for a time Jim's annoyance from this source was at an end.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE approach of winter found the Bentleys very well provided for. The little farm had repaid with a bountiful harvest the industry of Jim and his mother, for Mrs. Bentley had not been idle. She had kept the garden free from weeds, and a fine lot of vegetables were now stored for winter use. She and Ella had gathered and dried fruit as it came in its season, for she said, "If we cannot afford to buy sugar for it, we can sell it."

Jim had provided a good supply of wood, and the money he had earned during the summer was sufficient to supply all their other necessities.

All the work being done, Jim very much wished to go to school. Although he had a good mind and was quick to learn, he knew very little about books. He had been put to

work as soon as he was large enough to do anything, and had attended school very little. He had tried to study with his mother, but he was so frequently interrupted that he did not often attempt it. He had always been to the Sabbath-school, and had read books from its library, and a few other books that had fallen in his way. Now the thought of being classed so much below those of his own age troubled him. He felt that he would be constantly mortified at school. He spoke to his mother about it. She advised him to go and do his best. "You are not at fault," she said, "for not knowing what you have had no opportunity to learn. You know that I have had good advantages; and had circumstances favored me, I should have had you well taught. But you have always been so busy there has been no time. Begin now, before the winter term opens, and review what you have been over. I will help you, and perhaps you will take a better place in consequence."

So day after day and night after night found Jim intent on his books. He had reached the age when the mind comprehends readily, and his mother possessed the happy faculty of making her explanations clear; consequently he advanced rapidly.

The deacon came in one evening and found Jim busy with his arithmetic.

“Studying, eh! Well, that’s good business. Education is a good thing. I feel the need of it every day. Make the best of your privileges, and maybe there’ll be a way by-and-by for you to go and make something of yourself.”

Jim entered the school at its opening, and he had no cause to be mortified on account of his lack of scholarship. He studied diligently, and before the winter was over he had outstripped many of the boys who had enjoyed better advantages.

As spring opened, Jim laid aside his books to help Deacon Slocum to make sugar,

for in that region maple trees abound, and nearly every farmer makes his year's supply of sugar. The sugar-making season is a busy one while it lasts, as the sap is kept boiling day and night.

"The first thing to be done," said the deacon, as Jim presented himself one mild morning towards the end of March, "is to look after the buckets and tubs. When that's done, we'll have to hang the boiler, and get the wood piled up near it, ready to use. I hope we'll have a good season, Jim, and I mean you shall have a third of it, no matter how much we make. Some years we make nigh on to a thousand pounds."

So Jim went to work, bringing buckets down from a shed-loft where they were stored, and the deacon set them in the brook to soak. After they were all washed and soaked, so that they did not leak, they were taken to the sugar-bush. When the boiler was hung and the sap-tubs were located, they

commenced tapping trees. Then the boiling began. Jim often remained alone all night in the sugar house, but frequently the deacon staid with him till late in the evening. At such times they had many long conversations on different subjects. The deacon had sound common sense, and his opinions had weight with Jim, although he could not always clothe them in the smoothest language. He was very anxious that Jim should set out in life with correct views of its duties and responsibilities, and he often introduced serious topics in his conversation.

“Jim Bentley is made of prime stuff,” he said to his wife, “but I am concerned about a young man till he gets religion and joins the church. Nothing like religion, Priscilla, to keep a young man in the right path.” So he improved his opportunities to impress Jim’s mind with the need of religion.

“You see, Jim,” said he, “a man is safer if he’s got religion. There’s a strength he

can call upon that'll give him the victory over temptation, and there's many a thing that do n't tempt him like other men, because he's got more satisfying pleasure. No danger of any one's persuading a man that's bent on pleasing God to drink rum, or to gamble, or any such thing. Then we owe to God all we have and are, or ever can be. God, the Father, created us, and he preserves us; God, the Son, laid down his life for us; and God, the Holy Spirit, is waiting to comfort and sanctify us. So you see, Jim, when a man does not serve God he's cheating him, if I ought to say so, for I do n't suppose we really can take anything from God. He do n't need us as we need him, and it's our poor, sin-darkened souls that fare the worst; for no one knows till he tries it what a blessed thing it is to feel that he has an All-powerful Father watching over him, sleeping or waking, in joy or in sorrow, in sickness or in health, in prosperity or in adversity—One

who knows all about our circumstances, our characters, and our wants.

“When we are in great trouble, if we only turn our thoughts to him, yearning for his blessing, he comes right into our hearts and revives us, as the rain revives the grass after it has been withered by the scorching sun. God is good, Jim. Why, many a time when I look out on the face of nature and see all the provisions he has made for us, I get to thinking how good he is, and I sometimes get to crying, crying for gladness because his tender care is constantly over us. Why, it seems to me his love and goodness are stamped on everything he has made. It's no ways likely the unconverted see God in all his works as his children do, because they walk in darkness; but, Jim, it's my prayer that you may be one of the children of light.”

Thus did the good deacon sow seed that ere long was to spring up and bear fruit.

Jim worked early and late. On good sap days he went around twice and gathered the sap, so that none should go to waste; and he took special care that the sugar should not boil over, or be burned. When the season was over, he took home enough sugar to supply the family two years.

Mrs. Bentley had not been idle during the winter. She had earned with her needle enough to pay current expenses, so that spring found them in comfortable circumstances, and free from that worst of encumbrances, debt.

CHAPTER IX.

THE ensuing summer, the second after Bentley's death, brought fresh roses to Mrs. Bentley's cheek, elasticity to her spirits, and that continual feast, a contented mind. Life to her seemed again worth living. She resumed her former social position, and all good people seemed to forget her recent unhappy circumstances, and wished to make her forget them. She no longer dwelt mournfully on the past, or had occasion to dread the future. The present was hers to enjoy. Each day brought some new proof of the goodness and fidelity of her son. His industry, integrity, and manly character gained the esteem of all. But his mother, like the good deacon, longed for the time when he should be specially shielded in the all-powerful arms of a covenant-keeping God. This

dearest wish of the mother's heart was soon to be realized.

Early in the following winter an unusual religious interest prevailed throughout the community. The churches were filled, and the prayer-meetings were better attended than usual. The desire to see souls gathered into the heavenly garner was felt in all the churches, and many were earnestly seeking salvation. The young, especially, were inquiring what they should do to be saved. The pastors united and held a protracted series of meetings. The laymen were active also, praying and exhorting, and many felt that Jesus of Nazareth was passing by.

Jim was constant in his attendance at the meetings, and his mother prayed, as only mothers can, that God, in the plenitude of his mercy, would now gather her son into the fold of the Good Shepherd.

The deacon, too, was always in his place; but, for some reason unknown to his friends,

he was generally silent. The truth was, he doubted his ability to edify, or even to do any good in the cause so dear to his heart, when there were so many present who could speak more fluently than he. But, like many other true Christians, he underrated his influence. More than one heart was glad as the good man arose one evening, and, with a slight tremor in his voice, began to speak :—

“ Dear brethren, I don't expect to speak unto edification; but I love the Lord Jesus, and I feel I ought to say so. I have kept still in the meetings because I thought there were others here that could do more good than I can. But I felt a little uncomfortable last night after I got home. That parable about the talents came to my mind, and I thought perhaps I had one talent and I ought to use it. So I stand here to-night that you may all know that whatever influence I have I want to use on the Lord's side. For nigh on to thirty years the good Lord has led me

by the hand, with his face shining on me all the time. Even when I had sinned against him, I had only to ask him for forgiveness, and his peace came right back into my soul. God is good to us all, and I think I'd be very ungrateful to take the blessings I receive day after day and not acknowledge them. He has blessed me in basket and in store; he has blessed me with health and friends and gospel privileges. The privilege of hearing my dear brethren, and some of these dear young friends, testify to the Lord's goodness here to-night, makes my heart overflow with praise and thanksgiving. He has promised to be with his children when they are gathered together in his name, and, my brethren, he has fulfilled that promise all through the ages. He is here among us to-night, ready to own and bless all who come unto him. And you, my unconverted friends, if you only knew the blessedness of having your sins forgiven, you would no longer be

halting between two opinions, but would come right to the Saviour, before your heart gets too hard to weep over your sins, that cost nothing less than the blood of the Son of God."

One after another followed the deacon in a short address. Then an opportunity was given to those who felt an interest in their souls' salvation, to manifest it by rising. Jim Bentley was the first to rise. Great was the deacon's joy; and when at the close of the service the pastor asked him to pray, his prayer was so touching, simple, and earnest, that many eyes filled with tears, and many hearts responded, "Amen."

"Why, what a powerful man you have here; how devout he is," remarked a stranger to the pastor, as they were walking together after church.

"Yes," returned the pastor, "I often think that Deacon Slocum's life is one long psalm of praise. The glory of God is indeed the

chief aim of his life. A few such men in every place would go far to Christianize the world. He is sometimes diffident on account of his lack of education, but still he is my most efficient worker. His charities are wonderful, considering his means. Whenever I visit the sick or distressed I find, almost without exception, that he has been before me. But he never attaches any importance or merit to anything he does. He says, 'I was going that way and dropped in;' and when he has given anything, he says, 'We had more than we needed.' Why, some people look at him as a veritable saint; but he is so humble that it never occurs to him that he is any better than other professing Christians."

While the revival was at its height, Deacon Slocum met Tom Higgins and his father. His heart prompted him to make an effort to save these his fellow-mortals. So he said, "Mr. Higgins, I wish you would come to our meetings, and bring your boys

with you. It might be a great benefit, both to you and to them."

"Well, since it is you, deacon, I'll give you a respectful hearing. Some of the other church-members, who are pious only while revivals last, tried it on me; but I gave them their change back. But your religion I believe to be the genuine article; and I respect a man who lives up to his profession. I wish the boys would attend. Their mother, poor soul, was one of the pious sort. But as for me, deacon, it's no use."

The deacon remonstrated and urged; but Higgins repulsed him in his usual rough manner. "No use, I tell you, trying to teach an old dog new tricks."

"Well, Tom, perhaps you will come. As your father has said, your mother was a praying woman. Do you not want to live so as to meet her in heaven?"

At the mention of his mother's name, a long train of thought was awakened in

Tom's mind. He could not help knowing that without her they, as a family, had been miserable; and that her quiet, uncomplaining manner towards her undutiful children and her unfeeling husband, was the manifestation of Christian patience. These thoughts softened him somewhat, and he said, "Maybe I'll come," and walked away.

That evening, as Jim was on his way to church, he encountered Tom. His heart sank within him, for he thought, "Tom has heard I am serious, and he is going to ridicule religion." But Tom did not at first say anything. He stood kicking the hard, crusted snow with the heel of his boot; finally he said,

"Jim, would you mind taking a fellow with you?"

Jim had misgivings. He thought Tom's object in going was to disturb the meeting. But he said, "Come on."

The meeting was one of unusual interest;

but Jim did not enjoy it as he would have done but for the presence of Tom. He did indeed put up the mental prayer, "Save him," but it was with little expectation that it would be immediately answered. And he felt he could not witness for Christ with a scoffer at his side. But in another corner of the church sat Deacon Slocum. He had seen Tom enter, and his faith rose to meet the necessity of the case. He wrestled like one of old for a blessing on Tom Higgins. He prayed also that Jim might have strength given him to bear his cross. Both prayers were answered. For when the time came, Jim arose and said a few words for the Master he had so lately begun to serve; and when the anxious souls were invited to come forward for prayers, Tom turned and whispered to Jim, "Shall I go?"

"You are not in earnest?" asked Jim.

"Yes, I am."

"Then go, certainly." And he went.

Jim saw that Tom was deeply moved.

"I am so glad you came," said Jim after the close of the meeting, and he drew Tom's arm through his own to walk home with him.

Deacon Slocum came and spoke to them. He pressed Tom's hand firmly, saying, "God bless you, my boy."

A new life seemed opening before Tom Higgins. He had made two friends, and was led to hope for another Friend, stronger and truer than all earthly friends.

"Call for me to-morrow evening," said Jim as they parted. "We will go to church together."

Mrs. Bentley had not been present at the meeting. Jim's first words to her were, "Mother, Tom Higgins went forward for prayers."

She looked both pleased and surprised. "Nothing is too hard for the Lord to do," said she.

CHAPTER X.

As Tom Higgins entered his home that night, he found it in a state of confusion. His aunt was talking in a loud tone. Two of the children were contending for something. Little Johnnie was sleepy and crying because no one would take him to bed.

"I will take you," said Tom. "You shall sleep with me."

Johnnie went with his brother, wondering what made him so good. When he was ready for bed, Tom asked,

"Do you say your prayers now, Johnnie?"

"No," said the little fellow, "not always now, since ma died. Harry said it was of no use, so I stopped."

"You should do as ma told you. She knew better than Harry does."

"I s'pose so; but it seems as if there is n't



any God to hear me now. I used to go, when I was lonely for ma, and ask him to take me too; but he didn't. And Harry used to find me crying, sometimes, and ask me what I was crying for; and when I told him he would laugh at me. I'm lonesome 'most always now-a-days. I want to go where ma is. Nobody combs my hair now, and I never look nice as I used to. Seems to me, I a' n't Johnnie any longer."

"Well, I will take care of you," said Tom. "You are my dear little brother."

"I'd like to talk longer, Tom, 'cause you're so good; but I'm sleepy, and my throat's sore, and you'll have to 'scuse me. Kiss me, Tom. I believe it's a whole year since anybody kissed me."

Tom kissed the child, and sat down to think, as he had never thought before. When the candle had burned low in the socket, he took it and went to look at his youngest brother. It was as the child had said.

He did not look like Johnnie. The hair that had hung in clustering curls was now neglected and matted. The face on which the mother's last kiss was imprinted had tear-stains on it, and the little cheeks were sunken.

"Poor little heart-broken brother!" said Tom, and his own tears flowed freely. "I wonder if mother knows what I have done to-night, and that I mean to be good to Johnnie?" were Tom's last waking thoughts. He fell asleep, but was roused by a hoarse cough from Johnnie.

"What is it?" he asked, touching the child.

"I can 't breathe very well."

Aunt Eunice was called.

"I suppose he's gone and got the croup," said she; "and his father is off, no one knows where."

"I know too well where he is," answered Tom, "and I'll go after him as soon as I send the doctor."

"No; you must n't leave me; everybody else is cross," said Johnnie with laboring breath.

Tom turned, irresolute, having half a mind to send some one else.

"Oh, go along," said his aunt. "I guess I can manage him till you get back."

Tom stooped and kissed the little parched lips and hurried away. The doctor was not at home. The father was in a state of intoxication, and could but half understand what was told him. He got on his feet, however, and staggered towards home. Tom hurried on before him, for the little pleading voice seemed calling him. He found Johnnie worse. He called his brother George, and told him to go for Mrs. Slocum. The aunt, now thoroughly alarmed, made no objection. She was the aunt of Mr. Higgins, a maiden lady, and knew but little of the care of sick children. George did some grumbling about going out in the cold, and made little haste, but finally he set out.

Tom was much distressed as he saw the difficulty with which Johnnie breathed. How long the time seemed till help came! He and his aunt did all they knew how to do, but Johnnie was no better. They feared he would die.

The father came in with bloodshot eyes and idiotic stare. He but partially comprehended the situation. He sat down by the stove, and soon fell into a stupid sleep.

Mrs Slocum came as soon as possible.

"Has he been in warm water?" was her first question.

"No."

"Well, the child will die at this rate. Here, Tom, you pour this goose oil down him, and we must have a tub of warm water as soon as possible."

Tom went for water, and put it on the stove to heat.

Mrs. Slocum gave Johnnie a warm bath, wrapped him in flannel, put onions about his

throat, and administered all the remedies she had ever used in cases of croup. The doctor came about breakfast time. His treatment was no more successful than Mrs. Slocum's. God had heard the child's prayer, and was about to answer it. Till nearly noon little Johnnie struggled with death; then he gave up the unequal contest and went to his mother.

Mrs. Bentley was now sent for. Her deft fingers once more curled the hair of the fair little sleeper, and she and Mrs. Slocum arrayed the little form for the grave. Beautiful, indeed, was the clay from which the sorrowful young spirit had been taken to the love and joy of heaven. The high white forehead encircled with golden ringlets, the small, regular features, looking so sweetly restful, the little thin hand, holding a single half-opened bud from a monthly-rose tree, were not soon forgotten by those who looked upon them.

The family that had been so boisterous and ungovernable the preceding evening were now quiet and orderly, speaking in subdued voices, for all were solemnized by the presence of death, and sincerely mourned their loss. Each one now recalled some word or act of unkindness towards the inoffensive little one, and the remembrance added bitterness to their tears.

Higgins, now thoroughly sober, looked thoughtful. The hard expression on his face gave place to even a saddened one. He gazed long on the little broken human flower that, through his own evil course and cruel neglect, had wished to be transplanted to a sunnier clime, whither had gone the only one who had understood the clinging, sensitive nature. "How like my poor Mollie!" he said at length; then softly to himself he added, "Too much like her for an atmosphere like this." Then, turning about, he saw Tom seated in the opposite corner of the room.

He had not been aware of the presence of any one, for the short winter day was closing and the light was dim. Half ashamed of this slight show of feeling, he assumed a harsher look, and went out of the room.

His small stock of decency kept him from Turner's till after the burial of his child. On the evening after the funeral he went out, and chanced to meet Deacon Slocum. After some words of sympathy and condolence, the deacon remarked,

"I thought you would n't want to go anywhere this evening, or I would have asked you to go to meeting with me. You are not so blind to the dealings of Providence as not to see that God is speaking to you in this dispensation. He wants your soul saved. Oh, do not be so unmindful of your eternal welfare."

"I can't go to-night," said Higgins, turning away. "I should n't be on the street but for some business that is pressing."

The deacon, from very anxiety, turned and looked after him, and was somewhat relieved to see that he did not take the road that led directly to the bar-room. He could not see that he took the very next turn leading to it.

Tom staid at home, gathered his brothers around him, and, with the help of One stronger than himself, talked long and earnestly to them. He told them the step he had taken in the meeting, his determination to break off all bad habits, and his desire to serve God. He then in a certain way contrasted the characters of his parents by dwelling on the pure, unselfish love and long-suffering of his mother, leaving each one to contemplate the conduct of the remaining parent.

The brothers, George, Nelson, and Harry, were much impressed. They saw the force and truth of Tom's words. He told them that if they wanted to be anything in this life, they would have to strive for it; and if they wanted to be with their mother and dear

little Johnnie in heaven, they must live for it. He urged them to go to church with him, as that would be the first step towards respectability and right.

The boys talked the matter over next day, and concluded to do as Tom had desired. They went to church. Deacon Slocum, with a face full of kindly interest, took the brothers to his seat. After the meeting was over he expressed his pleasure at seeing them all there, and invited them to his seat every evening. After this the boys were in constant attendance. Tom made many attempts to get his father to attend; but they were fruitless. Higgins got tired of being importuned, and told Tom to have done with his preaching.

“I am glad you boys go,” said he, “but I will not go. You go your way, and leave me to go mine.”

“Father, have you considered where your way will lead you?”

"No. That will be bad enough when it comes. I shall not bid the Devil good-morrow till I meet him."

"Father, if you should change your course, we should all be the happier for it in this life, and perhaps we should all meet in that place it is pleasant to think of."

The father tossed his head impatiently, and with a firm voice replied, "If your mother's long years of blameless life could not recommend religion to me, how can such an upstart as you hope to persuade me, when you have not learned the alphabet of it? I tell you, I will not give up my pleasures. I am too old to change my course of life."

Tom turned away, grieved at his father's hardness.

The meetings ended. Many were the souls gathered into the church. Among them were Mr. and Mrs. Crawford, Martha Slocum, and, as has already been intimated, Jim Bentley and Tom Higgins.

CHAPTER XI.

IN less than a month from the time when Johnnie Higgins was buried there was another funeral in the family. Higgins had been drinking more than usual, and staying out very late at night. One morning the family found that he was not in his room, and had not been there during the night. While they were yet talking of his absence, a neighbor came and told them that the man had been found dead—frozen to death! It was true. Higgins had left the bar-room after midnight, hardly able to stand. The weather was intensely cold. He was unable to keep the road, and had gone but a short distance when he fell in the deep snow. There he was found in the morning. The suddenness of the event produced a shock. Bad as he had been, many had been interested in him at the

time of Johnnie's death, and had vainly entreated him to give up the terrible habit of intemperance.

The minister, when asked to preach a sermon, felt that he had an unpleasant duty to perform. But he dared not cry peace when there was no peace. Too many were intemperate, for him to pass lightly over the awful warning. The text he chose for himself was as startling as that which Bentley had chosen for him. He read Proverbs 29 : 1 : "He that, being often reproved, hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy." The sermon was very solemn. Many sympathetic faces turned towards the four boys now orphans. But who will say that with such a father they had not before been worse than orphaned?

The Higgins boys found themselves almost penniless. Their father had sacrificed everything to the demon of drink.

The good deacon offered Harry a home.

It was gladly accepted. Tom, whose recent course had gained him some friends, obtained a situation in a store. Two of the brothers were yet to be provided for. Tom went to Mrs. Bentley's and talked the matter over with Jim. Jim said he thought he knew a good chance for one. Mrs. McDonald, an excellent Scotch woman, generally spoken of as Aunt Nannie, because she was everybody's friend, had recently buried her only son, and she was looking for a trusty boy to live in her house and assist on her farm as her own son had done. She lived but a short distance from Mrs. Bentley's, and the two families were well acquainted. Tom was anxious to go at once and secure the place for one of his brothers; but Mrs. McDonald did not know him personally, and what she knew of his family would be of no advantage to him, to say the least; so he desired Jim to go with him. Jim readily complied, and the two had a pleasant walk.

"Jim," said Tom, when Aunt Nannie's was nearly reached, "I am glad you stuck to your resolve so firmly. I have admired you ever since, though I wouldn't confess it at first. Your refusal to drink has been worth a great deal to me, for it made me uneasy in spite of myself. I hope I have done with evil habits now and for ever."

They found Mrs. McDonald nearly sick with a cold. Her brother, who lived at the distance of half a mile, found it inconvenient to come any longer to do the work at the barn, so she had been doing it herself, and had taken cold in that way.

"I'm in sore need of a lad to mind the work at the barn," said she.

"We know two boys who want a place," said Jim. "This young man's brothers are without a home, and I feel sure, Aunt Nannie, that this would be a good place for a homeless boy."

"I thank you very much for your good

opinion of me, but I should not need them both."

"Oh, no; we do n't expect that."

"What do you call the lads?"

"George and Nelson," answered Tom.

"Geordie! that must be the one, for that was the name of my own bairn. But Geordie what? What's the other name?"

"Higgins," replied Tom.

Aunt Nannie's countenance fell, and Tom's face was covered with confusion. Aunt Nannie noticed it, and added, "It shall be, all the same. God forbid that I should have any prejudice against the bairn because of anything that's past, since God had mercy on my own son who had a like fault, and has not left me a lone widow without hope this day for him who's gone. Geordie Higgins will find Nannie McDonald's heart and home both open to him; and I will ask my brother if he will take the other lad."

The result of this conference was that

George went to live with Aunt Nannie, and Nelson with her brother, Mr. William Frazer.

Having found homes for his brothers, Tom gave his whole time and attention to please his employer. In this he succeeded, and gained the esteem of others also.

Deacon Slocum told the boys they might consider his house their home, and come whenever they pleased.

CHAPTER XII.

SPRING came again. Mrs. Bentley, wishing to keep Jim employed at home, took her money from the bank and bought ten acres of land adjoining her little place. The land being in a good state of cultivation, Jim went into gardening and fruit-raising. His close attention to business gave him success in this as in his other undertakings. He now had a settled occupation.

We will pass over several years, merely adding that Jim attended school every winter until he was twenty-one. He did not go away to school, as the deacon had suggested; but the public school of the village developed into an academy, and Jim availed himself of its advantages, and became a very good scholar. He read whatever good books came in his way. He taught in the Sabbath-school,

and was a very useful and respectable member of society.

Martha Slocum had fulfilled the promise of her childhood and become a beautiful and attractive girl. She had attended the academy for several years, and, as it just then became popular to go away to school, she went to Mount Holyoke for a year. On her return she took a position as teacher in the academy.

The parents had noticed for some time a growing attachment between these two young people. But Jim had not declared himself a lover. He felt that his circumstances would not justify such a declaration. He had his mother and sister to care for; and although the fruit-trees were now in bearing, and his garden was a source of profit, he did not consider his income sufficient to warrant any addition to his expenses. Especially could he not think of taking Martha from her comfortable home to share a poorer one.

While matters were in this state, Martha's aunt, the wife of her father's brother, came to visit at Deacon Slocum's, and brought with her a nephew of her own, Ralph Eaton. Martha had seen this young man when she visited her aunt in Boston, during the holidays while she was at school.

The design of Aunt Clara was soon apparent. But she overreached herself, as most match-makers do, in trying to arrange matters too quickly. Martha was indignant at her aunt's officiousness, and told her she was capable of choosing for herself.

"Girls never will be told anything," retorted her aunt. "If they would let older and wiser heads manage a little more, there would not be so many mismated people in the world. Now this gentleman is a lawyer, and likely to make a reputation. If you should marry him you would get up in the world. I suppose you will never have another such chance. You are well educated and good-

looking, and if you will do as I advise it will be the making of you."

She did not say that a prospective claim on the deacon's snug little property would be the making of her nephew; but she thought so, none the less.

Finding that Martha was not favorably impressed, and that she avoided Ralph, and refused to listen to her suggestions, she turned to Mr. and Mrs. Slocum.

"Don't you think Ralph and Martha would make a good match?" she asked.

"Well, I don't know. I a'n't in any hurry to marry Martha off. I like to have her at home too well for that."

"In all probability she will marry sometime, and it's always best to take the best chance."

"Well, I take it Martha has got sense enough to tell when her best chance comes."

"I hope she does n't care anything for that country fellow I have seen her talking with,"

Aunt Clara remarked after a short pause. "I should be ashamed of her if that was the case. Now although Ralph is so smart and well-to-do, I really believe Martha could catch him," she said, lowering her voice, and giving that peculiar kind of wink that people sometimes give when they are disposed to be confidential.

This "set a little too snug," as the deacon would have said, and he was framing an answer, when his wife began to express her mind on the subject.

"It's hard telling who is worth catching. We want Martha with us as long as we can have her. We do n't want her hurried away. Time enough when she takes a notion for herself. Then, if she fancies what you choose to call a country fellow, we sha'n't make any objections. There's no foolish pride about us."

The aunt now began to make preparations for returning home. She suddenly dis-

covered that country air was not as beneficial to her nephew as she had supposed it would be. This had been the pretext for bringing him with her. He had, she said, applied himself to his business with so much diligence that he needed relaxation and country air.

The young man, on finding how matters stood, assumed a great many airs, and kept aloof from the society of the family as much as decency would permit. He occupied his short remaining time in looking at natural scenery, adjusting his glasses with the utmost precision, or puffing a cigar as if his success in life depended on the ease with which the smoke escaped at the corner of his mouth. He and his aunt made their adieus in a formal manner and departed. The deacon's family breathed more easily; and Jim Bentley was unspeakably relieved.

CHAPTER XIII.

SHORTLY after the departure of the visitors, Jim found that he had some business with Deacon Slocum. He thought that if he was not welcomed with the old cordiality he would make but a short stay.

"Walk right in," said the deacon. "We have n't seen you for a long time."

"I have been very busy," said Jim.

Conversation commenced, and time passed so pleasantly that it was two hours before Jim rose to go. And no wonder, for a pleasant home was the deacon's.

Martha had, by dint of much coaxing, modernized the appearance of the rooms. The short, stiffly-starched curtains in the best room had given place to embroidered muslin ones, gracefully looped at the sides, and reaching to the floor. The gay rag carpet, long

the pride of Mrs. Slocum's eyes, had been transferred to the sitting-room, and in its place was a pretty, soft-colored ingrain. Some new furniture also found its way into Mrs. Slocum's "square room," and it was known as the parlor. The spare bed, high and round, as farmers' wives take pleasure in making their feather beds, was covered with a white counterpane. This cost the mother a sigh, as the patch-work quilt—the rising sun—that covered it had for years been an object of admiration, and she wanted it in a conspicuous place. So, very gently did Martha break it to her that she wanted a white spread for the spare chamber. The mother was hurt. She often felt that Martha did not appreciate the work of by-gone days. But a little good-natured argument usually decided matters in favor of the daughter's wishes.

Martha had studied music at school, and she often expressed a wish to have a piano.

“What do we want with a piano?” said the deacon; “our neighbors would all laugh at us.” Nevertheless, on his daughter’s twenty-first birthday anniversary he made her a present of a piano, for he took much pleasure in gratifying her wishes. She sang well, and so did Jim, and they often sang together, to the great enjoyment of the deacon and his wife.

Very pretty was Martha, with her wavy brown hair drawn back from her broad high forehead—for her youth passed before the days of bangs and frizzes—her clear rosy complexion, and soft hazel eyes. Her dress, though not expensive, was always in good taste. On the evening of which we are writing she was dressed in white, with a blue ribbon at the throat, and a knot of the same in her hair. Surely, Jim was pardonable for forgetting that, when he first came, he had thought he was in haste and could stay but a few moments.

Mrs. Bentley's house, also, had been changed for the better. The old home was now scarcely the same, so thoroughly had it been repaired. It was newly painted, and the windows were furnished with green blinds. The front yard was enclosed with a neat fence, and filled with flowers and shrubbery. Ella took delight in flowers, and might often be seen passing from one to another, now watering drooping plants, now culling bouquets to add cheerfulness to the pleasant sitting-room, or to adorn her own sunny chamber. No traces were left of the poverty and misery of her early childhood.

Mrs. Bentley was not blind to the beauty of her daughter—for Ella was a very pretty girl—and she often committed her to the care of him who is able to keep the heart from vanity and pride, and to beautify it with the graces of his Spirit.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE Higgins boys had meanwhile retained their places, keeping the good will of their employers, although George had several times drunk so freely that his kind friend had noticed it. This grieved her much, for she had grown to be very fond of him, often calling him her "bairn." He, too, felt sad and discouraged in view of his weakness, for he truly desired to overcome it. He talked with Aunt Nannie about it. She was very patient with him, and promised to tell him the story of one who had gone much deeper into sin than he had, but had reformed and become a useful member of the church, and a comfort to his friends.

One wild winter night, when the storm was raging, and the wind moaning and howl-

ing, Aunt Nannie, silent and pensive, sat before the huge fire which burned in the open fireplace—for she would have an open fire, “to seem more like the old home,” she said.

George had often noticed that on stormy nights like this she looked sad and abstracted; and remembering that he had heard it said that people’s troubles do not hurt them so much when they talk about them, he asked,

“Aunt Nannie, could you tell me that story to-night?” guessing rightly that she was thinking of it.

“Ah, my bairn, it will be sad to relate; but I will not keep from you what may be for your good. I will tell you the sorrowful tale of the faults of one who is dear to me, much in the same way that one gives the body of a friend to a dissecting-knife, that other folk may profit by it.

“That you may the better know how my heart would be set on my bairn, and the need

that he should be a comfort to me, I will go back a bit and give you a few scraps of my own history. In the whole country of Aberdeenshire there was not a merrier lass than Nannie Frazer. Folk often talked of my bonny face; whether I was bonny or not, it does not matter. I know well I had a light-some heart, at any rate. Long was I the joy of my parents; ay, I was to them like their very eyes. But when I was a lass of twelve years, Willie, my brother, was born. I was far happier then, for he was a winsome wee playmate. But I could not stay a bairn, you know; and when I was almost twenty I wedded with Captain McDonald.

“A year from that time Geordie was born. We were a happy family. My husband never sailed far away, and he was often with us. He was very proud of wee Geordie; but he did not live long enough to hear our wee one call him father.”

Here she stopped and wiped her eyes, but

soon overcoming her feelings somewhat, she proceeded :

“ One wild night the waters of the North Sea covered him. I cannot dwell on it. Oh, but it was sore news that came to me ! I do not know how I lived. It was a woful time, a woful time,” she slowly repeated.

“ But Geordie was left to me. And I said to myself, ‘ He will be a comfort.’ I was in my father’s house, and all were very good to me. Geordie grew fast, and was a cheerful, winsome lad. Many is the time my father has laughed at the bairn till the sides of him shook. And he was as good-natured a bairn as you ever saw ; but never, from a wee bit lad, could he say ‘ No ’ to anybody. I mind my mother once said, ‘ Geordie must learn to say No before he grows to be a man, or it will be the worse for himself.’ Never was truer word spoken. But I must not come to that yet.

“ Willie was very fond of Geordie, and the

wee one was as much taken with him. So it came about that when the lads met, with their games and one thing and another, wee Geordie was always at Willie's heels; and from that time he was too fond of company. I did not mind him as I should have done had not my mother been taken with a long, wearisome sickness, and the end of it was death. I grieved sorely for my mother. I had never been away from her. It seemed to me that the light of our home went out with her dear life. But if I grieved much, father grieved more. He would not take his meat, as was good for him, and he wearied night and day for her of the cheerful face, the tender heart, and the willing hands. He was like one whose guiding-star had set. At last he turned to my mother's pocket Testament. It was with him in the house and in the field, at home and abroad. From that he first learned that wisdom that cometh from above. But he never seemed himself after my moth-

er's death. Willie and I tried to comfort him, but we had much need of comfort ourselves. Wee Geordie alone did not realize the loss. But it was not many years before my father followed my mother. Geordie was older then, and he grieved too. He would not play; he would go out and sit on a bit of a stone, or anything that came in his way, and cry for his grandfather. The lad had a tender heart, with all his faults.

“But time works changes with one's feelings; it softens sorrow. We think we cannot live, and we live, for all. O Geordie, the heart will bear much and not break, else mine had snapped long, long since. You will be thinking my story long and sad, but I have not come to the worst of it.

“Geordie was soon a fine, strong lad, with a merry heart and a thoughtless head. He was always in some prank or other in the school. That worried me, as you may well judge. I did not then know that it was the

best time I should see with him for many long years. But a merciful God keeps the future from us, or our strength would all be spent before we came to our troubles. Then we could not bear them.

“When a mother looks on her wee bairns, let her hope for the best; that is well; but she must not weary to have them grow up, for she cannot know the sorrow they may bring to her heart. She need not think that the love she gives them will be repaid with ingratitude and disrespect; but it may be even so. And when they sicken, and she will not give them up, but prays they may be spared, without saying ‘God’s will be done,’ she does not know what she may be asking for.

“But I must not weary your patience. Geordie was much given to strong drink. His mother’s entreaties would win promises from him, but never did he mind them when he was out with other lads. Or, if he minded

them, he was more afraid to be laughed at than he was to break his mother's heart. Willie, my brother, always stood by me. Not a lass in all those parts was so bonny as to win him from his sorrow-stricken sister. He tried to make up to me what Geordie lacked in giving. But, my lad, though a brother is near, it is a bairn who is linked with every fibre of the heart.

“Geordie was a spendthrift with it all, and our silver was all taken up—the hard earnings of my father long gathered to his rest; and that was not all, for we were even fain to undermine the old place were we first saw the light of day, to bring the lad through the many troubles he brought upon himself. I feared he would lay himself open to the law in some way. Not a night but my pillow was wet with my tears. One wail went up from my heart, ‘Woe is me! woe is me!’ Earthly helpers all failed; so I the oftener bethought myself of the never-failing Helper,

and I poured out my soul to him. That was all my consolation. When we were sore pushed to know what to do, Geordie himself thought of a plan. 'Go away, mother,' said he, 'to the United States of America, from all my old associates, and I will promise to mind my ways.' That is ten years ago when the spring opens. Willie would almost take his life in his hand to help me. So we sold our home and divided the avails of it when we had paid our obligations. It was a bonny home, that was deeded to my father for a great service he rendered to an earl. We came to America, and we had enough left to buy the homes we both have.

"Geordie was true to his promise. He learned to love the good Father whose long-suffering bore with his waywardness. And when I was called to give him up to death, it was with the sure hope of meeting him in a better world.

"Willie soon married a young woman

he met on shipboard, and a good wife she is; but he never lost his love to his only sister.

“You now have my story. I hope you will never need me to repeat it, my bairn, my second Geordie. Be a good lad, and a good man, and there will be a provision made for you when my head lies low. I am not old, but sorrow has made me seem so. Oh, Geordie, strong drink is the bane of the world! It is that has made my life so wearisome. But I have had other troubles, as I have told you. I cannot know all that God’s dealings with me mean, but I make bold to hope I shall be one of those who stand before the throne arrayed in white robes, for I shall have come up out of great tribulations. Now, Geordie, see that you add nothing to them.”

“I hope I never shall,” said George, much affected.

CHAPTER XV.

CHESTER CRAWFORD found that temperance and the new life he was leading rendered himself and his family much happier. He often thought with a shudder of the days now long past; and it was with him a matter of sincere thankfulness to Almighty God, in whose strength alone he trusted, that he had been enabled to overcome his besetting sin. Mrs. Crawford had lost the sad, weary look of by-gone years, and the roses again bloomed on her cheeks. Will, who was now a young man, was a son to be proud of. He was studying medicine, with energy and success. Helen, his sister, was three years younger.

She was a bright, active girl, finding much sunshine in life, and making much for those around her.

Their home was very attractive, and they

were in comfortable circumstances. They and the Bentleys were intimate friends, and had been so ever since the death of Bentley. Now another agency was at work to cement their friendship more closely.

The childish affection that had sprung up between Will Crawford and Ella Bentley, when Will had fought her battles at school, had ripened with maturer years. But, though united in heart, they knew that years of waiting must precede the consummation of their hopes, for Will had to finish his medical course and secure a fair practice before he could reasonably marry. But he was so sure of his prize that he was willing to study, work, and wait. Shall anything cause him to feel less confident? We shall see.

About the time that Ella was eighteen years old, Ralph Eaton again visited the town, lured back, he said, by the delightful scenery, healthful air, and trouted brooks. If he had other motives, they were not known.

Perhaps he had a lurking desire to know whether he might not, by using more tact, yet win Martha Slocum. But he was not long in learning that she was engaged to Jim Bentley. He, however, remained several weeks at a public boarding-house, and seemed to have no lack of recreation and amusement. The best fishing place was near Mrs. Bentley's, and the route to it led past her house. Eaton, equipped with hook and line, often sauntered past. Sometimes he saw Ella as she was working among her flowers. One day he stopped and asked for some water. She gave it to him, and he thanked her very politely, but did not pass on. He lingered near the flower-beds expatiating on their beauty with well chosen words, for he had good conversational powers; indeed, he was charming when he chose to make himself so.

"That young lawyer is very agreeable," Ella remarked to Jim as they were seated at their cheerful tea-table.

"How do you know?"

"Why, he stopped here to-day and asked for some water. Then he staid a few minutes and talked about plants and flowers."

Jim remembered the uneasiness Eaton had once caused him. "Most people can make themselves agreeable for a short time, if they choose," said he; "but I don't like him, and I don't want you to make his acquaintance."

Here the matter dropped for that time.

But in a few days Eaton again appeared at the gate. Ella was among her flowers. He bade her good morning, and began to talk very animatedly. At length he spoke of a certain plant, and, to show her to what he referred, he coolly walked in.

Ella was surprised, but she treated him with politeness. After talking a few minutes, he took up his fishing-rod and walked away.

When Jim heard of this, his brow clouded.

"Ella, you must avoid that man," he said seriously. "He drinks freely, and may not always know his place."

Soon afterwards Will Crawford's friend—or perhaps we might better say his foe—wrote to him, gossiping about many things. Among other items he wrote, "You will have to look out, old boy, or you will lose that little specimen of perfection you feel so sure of. Ralph Eaton is in the place again, and he has been seen twice in Mrs. Bentley's yard, talking with Ella. Now don't be surprised at this. The course of true love never runs smooth, you know."

"What impertinence! What does the fellow mean by writing such stuff? The idea of attaching any importance to so trivial a matter! Suppose he has been in the yard; he's got impudence enough to go anywhere. Ella's flowers are beautiful; I suppose they must have attracted him. Nothing else, of course," soliloquized young Crawford.

He crushed the offending letter in his hand, then opened it and read it again. "Nonsense," he said, and tore it into fragments.

He took a book and settled down to read; but his thoughts wandered. "What a fool I am!" was his mental ejaculation. "Ella is as true as steel."

Nevertheless he was glad that his vacation was just at hand; his feeling of security had been disturbed, and he longed to reassure himself.

Unluckily his first visit to Mrs. Bentley's was not until after he had encountered Ralph Eaton, who, understanding how matters stood, added still more to his uneasiness by talking as if he and Ella were intimately acquainted. Consequently, Crawford met Ella with some degree of formality and reserve. She observed it, but could not divine the cause. This state of things continued for some time, until Ella felt hurt; but she was too proud

to ask for an explanation. Matters grew worse until one evening, when Jim and Ella were out walking, they met young Crawford. They were about to pass with a formal bow, when Jim stopped and began to speak.

"See here, Will, I think it is about time you and Ella both came to your senses. I think I understand how it is. There is some little mole-hill in the way that, for want of sweeping out of the way, is fast becoming a mountain. Now, Ella, you and Will walk together, and make up, like sensible children." Jim walked away, but turned presently and remarked, "I shall call you both to an account if you do not do as I have told you."

They laughed at Jim's injunction, and walked slowly along, each feeling somewhat embarrassed.

"I suppose I must confess," said Will, "that I do not like to have you so very friendly with Ralph Eaton."

"I am not very friendly with him," said Ella. "I gave him some water once when he asked for it, and talked with him a few minutes."

"Have you never met him but once?"

"I have met him twice. One morning, when I was transplanting flowers, he came into the yard uninvited. He talked a few moments, and went away. Since that time I have avoided him."

"How that interfering friend of mine has misrepresented the matter! I am provoked at him—and still more with myself."

"Why did you not speak to me about it, or did you prefer his word to mine?" said Ella, with a slight frown on her pretty face.

"I did not ask him, I assure you; nor did I want to hear anything from him. I am sorry I took any notice of what he said. I was ashamed to question you about it, but I might better have had the matter cleared up at once."

"Yes; I think as much. I have more reason to feel injured through your lack of confidence in me, than you have for anything I have done."

"You are right, Ella; and it will be a long time before I again give credence to any rumors so far as to be unhappy over them. But perhaps you do not consider that what one values very highly he is pained at the thought of losing."

"Well, you need not fear Ralph Eaton as a rival. He might be good for something if he would let wine and stronger drink alone. I am sure I would never trust my happiness to any one who was not, in the strictest sense of the word, a temperate man. I think, when a young woman consents to marry a moderate drinker, she runs a tremendous risk."

"I wish all young ladies felt as you do in regard to that. It would be a great check on intemperance. The truth is, they encourage it, by not making a proper distinction be-

tween those who drink and those who do not."

"That is what Jim says. He thinks, if the young ladies would form a league, and pledge themselves not to be seen in company with any intemperate young man, intemperance would be less general."

The rest of Will's stay passed more pleasantly, as our readers will readily believe. He had learned a lesson. Hereafter he would be less ready to listen to the voice of rumor; and he was convinced that the little difficulties and disturbances of life, real or imaginary, should at once be met and adjusted, as delay but increased the misunderstanding.

CHAPTER XVI.

BRIGHTLY dawned the golden autumnal morning of Martha Slocum's wedding day. The leaves, now many-tinted, trembled on the boughs, and glittered in the sunshine. A few bright flowers still adorned the garden, and the orchards were laden with their treasures of crimson and gold.

All was quiet this morning on the farm of Deacon Slocum. No apples were being gathered, no cider pressed, no corn husked. No: for once, on a week-day, farm work was of secondary importance.

But if there was a cessation of work without, within there were nimble feet and busy hands. Great preparations had been made. "Priscilla, do n't spare anything," the deacon had said. "We've got but one daughter."

"No: I'm not the one to do that. Nobody shall have the chance to say that we're stingy."

Martha herself had taken an active part in the preparations, and this morning she was plying between the kitchen and pantry, in a calico morning dress and white apron.

"Why don't you go and get ready, Martha?" asked her mother.

"I can get ready in a little while, mother, and I might as well help as long as I can, and be sensible, if I am to be married. You look tired yourself. Sit down and let me set the table."

"Now, did you ever!" said Mrs. Slocum; but she sat down and fanned herself with her apron.

Eleven o'clock was the hour appointed for the ceremony; and although it was only nine, Mrs. Slocum began to be uneasy lest they should not be ready. When Martha had finished her work, she said,



“Mother, let me help you to dress now. The tables are all set, and things are going right in the kitchen”—for a woman had been hired for the occasion.

“No, Martha, I don’t want to dress just yet. I don’t want to leave this care to anybody, and I might get a spot on my brown silk. You go and dress yourself, child; I’ll dress soon, and I’ll come up to have you settle the lace in my neck, for I might n’t get it just right, you know.”

Martha went up to her room, where lay her pretty lilac silk, elegant laces, white kid gloves, and the beautiful watch and chain, the wedding gift of her indulgent father. She dressed without worry or excitement. Just as she had finished, her mother came in, and surveyed the bride with a great deal of admiration and love expressed in the pretty brown eyes that were like Martha’s own.

At eleven o’clock precisely James Bentley and Martha Slocum were married. Af-

ter the congratulations a sumptuous dinner was served. Then followed music and conversation. At two o'clock the bride and groom entered the deacon's best carriage to ride to the railway station, for they were to take a short wedding trip.

With many kind wishes from the friends and guests, Martha and Jim drove away.

In a week they returned. The deacon had wished that they should live with him, but Jim's gardening had become quite lucrative and he declined the offer, preferring to be independent. The deacon was disappointed, but at the same time he admired Jim's spirit.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE years passed swiftly by, and changes came, for Time never fails to bring them. But at the home of the Bentleys there was no reason to complain of his work. Very gently had he touched the hair, cheek, and brow of the mother, who bore the chastened but peaceful look of one who, through varying paths of trial and quiet happiness, has been led by a trusted though unseen hand towards a placid old age.

Jim, meantime, had been approaching a worthier manhood. Stimulated by the example of Deacon Slocum, whom he loved and revered, he had given earnest thought and effort to the things that make character noble and useful, and, above all, to the One Character whom all should imitate. Becoming more and more sensible of his own short-

comings and weaknesses as he learned more of Christ, he was yet perseveringly striving after a closer walk with his Saviour, in the strength which the Holy Spirit was ever ready to supply. He was watchful to exert his influence in the cause of temperance, regarding that as one of the things that decidedly make for peace and edification. His mother had no occasion to complain of neglect from him, for although his wife and infant daughter occupied their proper place in his affections, his mother was not less loved. With him the channel of affection seemed to widen as new ties were formed.

Martha had lost something of her girlish look, but in its place was a sort of mature beauty more pleasing than the well-rounded cheeks and girlish manner.

Ella's pretty face showed more character and thoughtfulness. She was now about to be married, and she asked and received advice of Martha as of an older sister. She

had taken Martha's place in the Academy, and had retained it until now, bearing her share of the family expenses, particularly in furnishing her mother's wardrobe. This pleased the deacon exceedingly, as it showed an unselfish disposition; but suspecting that she might have to calculate closely to procure her outfit, he gave Martha fifty dollars to present to Ella in her own name. This was his old way, hiding behind his good deeds, willing that some one else should take the praise.

Martha and Ella went to a larger town to do their shopping, while the mother remained with little Sadie. Martha was an adept at shopping. She managed to buy a beautiful light silk, and a rich, serviceable travelling dress, with the gift of her father. A black silk was bought at the same time. The ladies returned well pleased with their purchases, and the mother's admiration was equal to their anticipations. A dressmaker

came, and cut and fitted the dresses, but the making was accomplished by the three ladies themselves.

There was a feeling of sadness mingled with these preparations, for Ella was to leave home and go wherever Dr. Crawford should be able to secure a good practice. He was then practising in an adjoining town; but his success did not meet his wishes, and he feared he should be obliged to remove elsewhere. However, he determined to give the place a fair trial. Accordingly, he bought a horse, that he might be able to meet calls from the country. But somehow it happened that the horse's head was too frequently turned towards the Bentley place. The doctor became aware of this himself.

"I see I shall have to take Ella with me, if I am to succeed," he said.

So it was decided that Ella's wedding should take place sooner than had been anticipated.

It was not without a slight pang that the mother gave her daughter to the keeping of another. The blank, untried future : who shall presume to fill up its unwritten pages, when human calculation is so often doomed to failure ? But the mother's hopes were strong. Her daughter's husband was a man of good habits based on Christian principles ; and these last she justly regarded as a strong safeguard.

Dr. Crawford's business soon began to improve ; people trusted him, for he was careful and conscientious ; so in a year from his marriage he took a house and considered himself permanently settled.

CHAPTER XVIII.

ONE evening, as Aunt Nannie and George Higgins were seated at the supper table, the conversation turned upon the future and its prospects.

“And is there no lass that you like above another, Geordie?” asked Aunt Nannie.

George laughed, much amused, for the question was as strange as unexpected.

“Why, what makes you ask that, mother?” he said, for he was now her adopted son.

“Well, I do n’t see that you show any preference to any lady, and most young men do before they reach your age. I feel that my time is not long; and should it be longer than I think, it heartens a body a bit to have company. I would not be the one to make objections to a wife if you bring one.

“Well, Geordie, you do n’t answer,” said

Aunt Nannie after a pause ; “ you need not think I do n’t mean it.”

“ Well, mother,” he said, half laughing and half serious, “ there is only one girl I could feel a special interest in, and she is out of my reach.”

“ Hoot, toot ! Faint heart never won fair lady, you know. Is it so homely a place to bring a wife to that you think she would not come ? I have a bit put by ; some of it could be used to make the place look bonnier.”

“ I did not mean that. I am not dissatisfied with the place. It is good enough for me, and it would be good enough for mine. But, you know, father left us disgraced, and I have not been free from his weakness myself ; though, thanks to you, I have not fallen many times.”

“ Thanks be to Another, Geordie, who was pleased to use my influence for your good.”

Aunt Nannie had a woman’s curiosity to

know who George's favorite was. But she was not likely to become possessed of his secret through his own confession, and she wisely forbore to question him on the subject.

A few days after this conversation, Aunt Nannie was spending the afternoon at Mrs. Bentley's, and Helen Crawford chanced to drop in for an hour. As was quite natural, Aunt Nannie found occasion to speak of George Higgins, whom she praised warmly, and finished by saying that he would make a good husband for some one. Helen colored and quickly changed the conversation. Aunt Nannie noticed the blush, and thought it quite possible that she had obtained the clew to the secret.

That evening, as she sat with George, she told him of her visit, and of having seen Helen Crawford.

"And a bonny lass she is, with a sunny face, and a sunnier heart, I make no doubt," she remarked.

George at once betrayed an interest.

"I am sure of it now," thought she.
"Leave me alone for the rest of it."

Mrs. Dr. Crawford had always been a great favorite with the old lady, and had frequently spent the day with her. So, when Mrs. McDonald saw her again, she invited her to come and make a visit, and added, "Bring Helen with you, for I am well pleased with the company of young folk." Mrs. Crawford promised to come, and appointed a day.

"Geordie," said Aunt Nannie on the morning of the visit, "cut the heads off two of those ducks. I am to have company to dinner. I will call you a bit early, and you'll have time to fix yourself up."

Long before the guests arrived, Aunt Nannie had completed her preparations. Everything was in order, from the row of shining pans, outside the door, to the loft, as she always called the garret.

Many times did she go to the door and look out on the road, her face encircled by the border of her snowy cap, and her hand placed over her eyes to keep them from the bright sunlight. Her dress was of pretty plaid gingham, and her low shoes showed the home-made stockings with devices cleverly knitted in them. A silk kerchief, crossed on her bosom and confined by her belt, completed her costume.

Ella was delighted to spend another long, bright summer day with her dear old friend; and Helen seemed pleased too, but was less demonstrative.

Towards night Dr. Crawford called for the ladies, as had been arranged. But, being in a hurry, he could scarcely take the time to drive out of his way to take his sister home.

"So much the better," thought the old lady, while she very composedly remarked, "Geordie can harness up one of the beasties and take her home."

"Thank you; that will do, will it not, Helen?" said the doctor.

"I suppose so, if it is not too much trouble."

"He will not think it trouble to wait on a lady," said Aunt Nannie.

This being settled, the doctor drove off with his wife. George, being informed of the plan, set about getting ready, and in due time brought the buggy to the door, and helped Helen to her seat.

"Surely," thought Aunt Nannie as they drove away, "she must be hard to please if she does not fancy my Geordie."

But it would appear that Helen was very well pleased, as the horse frequently carried his young master over the same road they travelled that night.

Aunt Nannie took a lively interest in George's courtship, and was well pleased when the marriage took place about a year from the time of the visit.

Helen had grown very fond of the old lady. She had become accustomed to her quaint ways, and she knew that beneath the old-fashioned dress was as true a heart as ever beat in woman's breast. She anticipated many years of quiet enjoyment with her; but it was not so to be. Within a month from the time of the wedding Aunt Nannie died, after an illness of only a few days.

Her neighbors heard of her sickness with sincere sorrow. The years she had spent among them had been so full of sweet content, and so rich in good works, that she had drawn the hearts of all towards her. Even the little children were sad;—for had they not all felt the gentle pat on the head, and eaten of her seed cake, her apples, and her cherries?

She said but little during her illness. She had no care, apparently, but seemed occupied with her thoughts. Occasionally a fit-

ting passage of Scripture would be repeated slowly and with emphasis. When asked by Mrs. Bentley, who came daily to see her, whether she thought she would recover, she answered, "No: I think my time has come. It is not a long journey;—one wee step in the darkness; then comes light for ever. And friends will meet me there, think of it—friends, long lost friends—father, mother, my own Geordie."

Then, as if talking to herself, she continued, "And who knows but, by the great mercy of the Lord, one other will be there! Who knows! who knows! That would, indeed, be perfect happiness, to be all gathered home; for Willie will be sure to come. Dear Willie, who has always been so good to me! God bless and keep him and his."

At another time she said, "Jesus will be the chief attraction in heaven, and we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. Death lays the body low, but it cannot hold

it so. When the resurrection morn shall come, the bands of death will be burst asunder, and we shall rise with a glorified body like unto our Master's; ay, we shall wake in his likeness. These hands and this tongue may turn to dust; yet shall I hold a golden harp and sing praises to the Lamb who has redeemed me, through all the ages of eternity."

When the sun rose on the last morning of her life, she said, "Bonny is the sun's rising here; and bonny was his glinting from the hill-tops in my old home beyond the sea; but I may not see him long now. I am almost where they need not sun, nor moon, nor candle, for the Lamb is the light of that country."

About noon she asked, "What o'clock is it?" On being told, she remarked, "By this time the morrow I may be where time shall no more be counted, but it shall be one everlasting morn."

She said no more. Just before the sun set, she passed away. "She sleeps in Jesus," said Mrs. Bentley to the sorrowing brother, and to George and Helen, whose tears were silently falling.

Like a flower that gently folds itself when night approaches, so softly, so peacefully fell Aunt Nannie's eyelids, shutting out earth's views for ever.

"So quickly," thought George, "does sorrow follow in the footsteps of joy; so do light and shade mingle in this world of ours. Oh, may the trust that you had, my dear, true friend, be with me as I pass through life's changes!"

On examining Mrs. McDonald's will, it was found that the farm had been left to George Higgins. But the money which she, through her economy, had laid by, together with all the articles which she had brought from Scotland, she left to her brother.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE years we passed over in the last chapter have whitened the heads of several persons of whom we have been writing, Mr. and Mrs. Crawford, having given up their children to build other homes, lived comfortably on the moderate income that years of labor and economy had brought them. Mrs. Crawford looked scarcely past her prime, but Mr. Crawford, who was several years her senior, and whose early habits had not been without their effect on him, showed unmistakable signs of age. But they enjoyed life, being at peace with God and man.

It is not without regret that we come to take up another part of our story. A shadow hung over the home of Deacon Slocum. There was a noiseless tread of untiring feet, a midnight lamp, and the coming

and going of anxious faces. The good deacon was ill. His life hung in the balance. Hope at one time bore up his faithful Priscilla; then fear almost unnerved her hand as she bent over her husband to administer cordials, or adjust his pillow.

Once when an unbidden tear from her eye fell on the deacon's cheek, he looked up quickly, and with tenderness in look and tone he said,

"Priscilla, are you crying? You ought to know that separations must come in this life. We have had a great many years of pleasant companionship. We have lived in such a way that we can have no regrets as to our conduct towards each other, and our separation cannot be long.

"I spoke to Jim last night about selling out and coming here after I am gone. He'll do it, I think, Priscilla; and they'll be good to you, I know. I put off speaking to you as long as I could, because you don't feel

like giving me up. My will is made. It's all yours till you've done with it. Then it will go to Martha—all but five hundred dollars that Harry is to have, and five hundred to the church. I wish that to the church could be paid soon, to wipe out the debt on it. I would like Harry to stay here as long as he wants to, if he and Jim can get along together. When the time comes that he wants to go and do for himself, give him his money. He has been a good boy, Harry has. Those Higgins boys have turned out well, and I am thankful for it."

The minister frequently called. He felt that the church was losing its strong support; the deacon's death would leave a blank that would be hard to fill.

"How are you this evening?" he said on entering the room a short time before the deacon's death.

"Very comfortable, both in body and mind, thank you."

"Then the near prospect of death does not disturb you?"

"No more than if, when I was a boy and had been working all day in the field, my father had said at night, 'That will do now, Jonathan; you may stop work and rest.'"

The minister saw much in this homely simile. He said, "I think you have done your best, so far as human eye can see, to serve your generation in the field of the world, and I doubt not you have gathered many sheaves. But I thought you enjoyed life. I did not know you were weary."

"I trust I am not 'weary in well-doing,' or in trying to do well. And I did not mean to say that I wouldn't have been willing to stay longer in the field if I hadn't been called in. I only meant to say that I would not be sorry when rest came. I take it, God gives his children grace to be willing to die or to live, as his dealings seem to indicate. We don't want dying grace to live by.

When we need it, it will come to us. When we are in the world and life is before us, we want to feel strong and willing to labor in the world and in the church. We don't want to be calculating all the time on dying. It is just as much a man's duty to take up life's burdens as cheerfully as he can, as it is his duty to go to prayer-meeting. It's no use for us to say, 'God is good,' if we act as if he did n't know best how to discipline his children, and go mourning all our days because he has seen fit to afflict us in some way. Folks do n't believe us when we say one thing and act another.

"But excuse me, brother. I got to thinking so hard I forgot myself. It's no ways likely I can edify you."

"There is no need of an apology, Brother Slocum. I am sure I have received benefit from what you have said. It is not always the most learned who have the most correct ideas of religion. It is the education of the

heart that gives true knowledge, for through the operation of the Holy Spirit the understanding becomes enlightened. God often makes use of very humble instruments to glorify his name."

"That is so. Since I have been lying here sick, more than one person has said to me, 'Deacon Slocum, you first made me respect religion.' I cannot see how, with all my shortcomings, I have recommended it, and I feel ashamed that I have not better deserved their praise. Thanks be to God for his unspeakable gift of a perfect cleansing and a perfect righteousness in Christ, and a perfect holiness, too, in heaven."

Deacon Slocum's malady was cancer in the stomach. When he was free from pain, he loved to converse with his friends. Martha often sat by her father's bedside. She never wearied of his conversation. She had seen the time when his peculiar pronunciation, and occasional ungrammatical expres-

sions, grated on her ear; but now every word was treasured in her memory.

“Martha, always remember the poor,” he said to her one day as she sat beside him. “God watches how the poor are dealt by; and you will never be the poorer for giving to them, for the Lord pays back all we lend him. Besides, one gets a great deal of happiness out of giving. The Saviour himself said it is more blessed to give than to receive. Your mother has tested that a good many times. And, Martha, there is no telling how much good it will do a person all his life to be helped a little at the right time. Many people have been discouraged and given up trying to get along because no one lent a helping hand. That is n’t right. It is n’t bearing one another’s burdens, and so fulfilling the law of Christ.”

When talking with Jim one night, the deacon urged him always to help forward the cause of temperance, and to manifest the

greatest kindness and forbearance towards those who were trying to overcome the habit of intemperance.

“You know we are all debtors to the grace of God, and have nothing that we have not received; so be patient with the weak and erring, Jim. We have all got faults, and we expect God to forgive them; so let us forgive our fellow-mortals, though their faults may be different from ours. Your life has been useful already. Go on towards perfection. Deal in good works and kind words;—they make no food for repentance.”

To Harry, whose most prominent fault was impetuosity, he said,

“I hope you will turn out well, my boy. Do n't make a failure of life for want of a little forethought. Never act on the spur of the moment, unless you are certain you are right. If your heart tells you to do a kind deed, you need not always stop to think; though even in doing a kindness 'wisdom is

profitable to direct ' about the best way to do it; and then, too, what at first looks like generosity sometimes turns out to be injustice. But if your temper tells you to return evil for evil, think long about it, and see if the teaching of the Bible would not be best; for you know it tells us to return good for evil. You have been with me a number of years, and it's no common interest I feel in you, Harry. You have been a very good boy, and a good boy generally makes a good man. But sometimes when young men first start out in the world, they get led away and spoiled. There is one thing that would keep you safe, and that is the grace of God. I should rejoice if I could only know you had given your heart to God. It would be in safe keeping, Harry.

"Then I would like you to promise me you never will drink strong drink. Jim resolved he never would, long before he was as old as you are, and he never drinks a drop. I do n't believe you do, either. But it might

be a good thing to promise me you never will. For doubtless you will be asked to drink, and you might think there is no harm in just one glass; but, Harry, taking the first glass is bad business. But if you promise me, you would say to yourself, 'No: I promised Deacon Slocum I would not,' and that would keep you from falling into temptation.

"I sha'n't have many more talks with you, and I do wish that I might say something that would do you good. Keep straight, Harry. There'll be plenty of people to help you off the track, but few that would reach a hand to help you up again."

There was a choking in Harry's throat, and tears in his eyes.

"I promise you," he said, his voice choked with emotion, "that I will be a temperance man. You have done more for me than my own father did, and I owe you a greater debt of gratitude. You have given me home and

education, and that which I prize still more, your friendship, and I will not refuse you what is in my power to grant.

“As to trying to serve God, I shall not hesitate longer. I have seen the beauty of religion exemplified in your consistent life. Pray for me that I may be brought out of the darkness and deadness of sin into the light of life.”

“The God of all grace bless you, and make you his own now and evermore,” was the benediction of the deacon.

The disease made steady progress, and the good man's life was fast drawing to a close. His heart was full of pity for his wife and daughter, who still clung fondly to him. But for himself he rejoiced that his race was run.

As long as he lived he continued to exhort those who came to see him to follow in the footsteps of the Master.

“To me,” he said, “death has no terror,

for Christ is with me, and he sustains me. 'Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?' 'Neither death, . . . nor any other creature,' " he murmured faintly, a little later.

Soon after uttering these exultant words he fell asleep in Jesus.

CHAPTER XX.

As might be expected, the deacon's death brought about some changes. Jim moved over to the deacon's farm. Mrs. Bentley sold her place to Tom Higgins, who had laid up some money and wanted to change his business. He had married into a respectable family, and was quite a useful man in the community.

Harry remained at the Slocum farm. He and Jim were excellent friends and fellow-workers. They carried out as far as possible the deacon's plans, and did their work in the same manner, much to the satisfaction of Mrs. Slocum. That any one could quite equal her husband in farming was with her a matter of extreme doubt.

As the work gradually slipped into Martha's hands, the widow found more time

to gratify the impulses of her kind heart. Where sickness was, there she was; where want was, thither her feet hasted. Her presence often brought a twofold blessing, for she not only appeased the hunger of the body, but she often led the fainting soul to the Word of God, whence it derived spiritual food.

As her head whitened with age, it did not seem wintry in its significance, but simply the token of a beautiful ripening for the garner of heaven.

Mrs. Bentley spent part of her time with her son, and together the two aged ladies talked of the ways in which the Lord had led them. The interchange of their thoughts was beneficial to both, and far above that petty jealousy which so often affects persons similarly circumstanced. The mutual friendship heretofore felt was only deepened by a more intimate companionship.

Mrs. Dr. Crawford claimed part of her

mother's society; and thus while the silver threads were whitening Mrs. Bentley's once brown hair, she divided her time between her loving children and grandchildren. She, too, was passing through a calm, peaceful old age; "at eventide it was light."

George Higgins was fondly attached to the home bequeathed to him by his dear old friend, his second mother. The remembrance of her piety and worth was ever with him. Helen was cheerful and industrious, and George thought the lines had fallen to him in pleasant places.

Nelson Higgins, of whom we have said but little, continued to live with Mr. Frazer. He had been faithful, and his faithfulness had been appreciated by his employer.

CHAPTER XXI.

RALPH EATON seemed to be much attracted towards our little town and its vicinity; for after repeatedly visiting it during the summer, he at length returned to settle and practise law. People thought it strange, but they soon found that he was more of a sportsman than a lawyer. The woods and streams had more charms for him than law books or office; and he was not ambitious to make a name in his profession.

Nor was this all. He frequented drinking-saloons—at first not those resorted to by common drunkards; but the time soon comes to those who love strong drink when they are not particular where they find it. Shame yields in the unequal conflict with passion and soon those who have styled themselves

moderate drinkers come reeling from the lowest dram-shops.

So it was with Ralph. Naturally deficient in moral force, he became still weaker in that respect through his social and sporting habits. Hints of his apparent failure reached the ears of his aunt and confirmed her own unspoken fears. She at once decided to visit her husband's relatives, and see if her presence in town would not act as a restraint upon her nephew.

Accordingly Aunt Clara came once more to Mrs. Slocum's. She was received with a sufficient show of cordiality, though, if truth must be told, the family were not particularly glad to see her. They knew she had come from some selfish motive, and they waited till time should reveal it. Almost immediately she inquired the way to lawyer Eaton's office. Lawyer Eaton was not in. She left word to have him call at Mrs. Slocum's. Ralph soon appeared, but it was plainly evi-

dent that he was under the influence of liquor. His aunt was deeply mortified. He was very talkative, and every word deepened the blush of shame and vexation upon her face. At length she rose and walked towards the door. Martha followed her, for she had changed color and was now very pale.

“What is the matter, Aunt Clara?” Martha inquired.

“I feel faint,” said the poor woman, whose chagrin had actually made her ill.

“I feel sick too, Aunt Clara,” said Ralph, and started towards the door; but he lost his balance and fell.

This was a terrible mortification for Mrs. Clara Slocum. Here was the man of whom she had boasted, degraded before the eyes of the one whom she had affected to despise. Without exerting herself to control the expression of her feelings, she began to sob violently. After a while Eaton became aware of his situation, excused himself, and

took leave. As he passed Harry, the latter heard him muttering something about "old women staying at home and minding their own business."

The next morning, as Jim Bentley opened the Bible and read one of the beautiful Psalms of David, and then devoutly offered in prayer the thanksgiving and aspirations of his heart, Aunt Clara inwardly acknowledged his moral worth, and approved Martha's choice.

If our friend Martha was naughty enough to feel a slight gratification at the turn affairs had taken, she was too generous to nurse such a feeling. The knowledge that her aunt actually suffered, together with the remembrance that it is God who "maketh us to differ," led her to repel such thoughts as unbecoming a Christian.

Aunt Clara now changed her entire plan. She asked Jim, as a very great favor, to try to watch over her "poor boy," who, by the by, was not far from forty. Jim promised

to do so when he could without seeming officious. This answer was not quite satisfactory to Aunt Clara, nor to Priscilla Slocum. The latter spoke her mind on the subject.

“Now, Jim, if you'll let me say so, that's what I would call a little too particular. Jonathan Slocum would never have stood about such nice points. He always tried to do his duty whether men would bear or forbear. You just do and say what you ought to by this your fellow-mortal, and let God take care of the rest. Why, we a'n't more'n half awake, any of us. Suppose we do get into heaven ourselves; that's not enough. We want to feel that we've helped others on in the good way. We want stars in the crowns of our rejoicing. We want to hear, 'Well done, thou good and faithful servant;' and I don't call it faithful to shirk duties because they're unpleasant, or because we're afraid some one wont like to have us do them.

“Now, if I was you, I’d keep an eye on Eaton, and I’d tell him, as pleasantly as I could, that he’s spoiling himself. Nature has done a good deal for you, I’d say. That’ll break the ice, so he’ll take something else from you; for most people like a little praise, and if you can give it truly, it’s good to encourage them. Then talk to him as if you really did care for him, soul and body. Folks always took it well of Jonathan, because he felt what he said. He always did carry in his heart a burden for unsaved souls. And sometimes when he was pleading with any one, the tears would come into his eyes, and they could n’t stand it. Well, I suppose it was about as hard for him to speak to any one as it could be, for he never was a man to put himself forward. Ah, he was a good man; Jonathan was a good man.”

She covered her face with her hand, while the tears trickled through her fingers. Soon, however, she wiped them away, saying, “I

mustn't spend my time weeping for him. I must work for my Master as he did, so that when my time comes to leave this world I shall join him in his rest."

Jim felt that his duty had been set before him, and he determined to overcome the reluctance he felt, and try to turn Ralph Eaton from his evil ways.

But Ralph held aloof. Probably the remembrance of his last visit at James Bentley's prevented him from accepting any of the invitations extended to him. He felt as people are very apt to feel when, through weakness, or from deliberate purpose, they leave the path of rectitude; their own consciences condemn them sufficiently, and they want no additional remonstrances from any one. Consequently, Jim was repulsed in every attempt to lead him into a friendly or confidential conversation. But finding one day an opportunity to speak to him, he said,

"I wish, Mr. Eaton, you would not keep yourself at such a distance from us, if only on your aunt's account."

"Oh, I do n't want to have much to do with her. She is getting too preachy for me."

"Well, seriously, Mr. Eaton, has she not some cause to be apprehensive?"

"That is none of your business," said Eaton, firing up. "She can take herself back to Boston, and you can keep out of my way."

Jim hesitated. "Perhaps I did not approach you in the right way," he said, "but I meant no harm. I would like to be your friend," he added with more cordiality than might have been expected after Ralph's rebuff.

"I do not want your friendship. My friends are of a different stamp."

"Are you sure you have made a wise selection? Do your friends benefit you? Through their influence you are doing your-

self great injustice. Nature has qualified you for a higher position than you are at present likely to attain."

"What will your influence do for me, pray?" said the other with a sneer.

"My influence is at least not on the side of wrong. And I was hoping to persuade you to attach yourself to the moral and religious part of our community, who would be a benefit to you."

"Well," said Eaton, who had been softened a little by Jim's mildness and perseverance, "you are right, perhaps; but there is time enough yet to think about being religious. I don't believe in rushing matters."

Alas! a short time proved that what was considered time enough was far too scanty.

Late in the afternoon of a very warm day Jim Bentley started for the blacksmith's shop, riding one horse and leading another. The

work that required to be done occupied the time till very nearly dark. As he was about to start for home, the sky gathered blackness, the thunder muttered and rolled, the lightning darted across his way, and heavy rain-drops fell fast upon him. He urged his horses forward, trusting almost entirely to their sagacity to keep the course. When he had nearly reached home, the horse he was leading suddenly stopped, snorted, and refused to go forward. A flash of lightning revealed the cause of the animal's fright. Directly in front of him lay a man. Jim spoke to him, but received no answer. He turned the horses out of the way, to avoid trampling on him, and rode rapidly home. He lighted a lantern and, accompanied by Harry, returned to the spot. What was his horror to find that the man was Ralph Eaton! Although stunned, and badly cut and bruised, he was still alive.

Jim and Harry looked around to discover

the cause of the accident, and found the fragments of a carriage scattered along the road. Down a by-lane stood a horse, panting, and covered with foam. He had been lashed into the speed that had so nearly proved fatal to his driver, and had freed himself from the unmerciful treatment. The animal was now perfectly quiet, and Harry led him to a tree and tied him. The two men then bore Eaton to their own house, and called a physician. Ralph's skull was found to be fractured, and he was otherwise badly injured.

It was ascertained that he had taken a horse from the livery stable in the morning, and that, on leaving a village ten miles distant, he was in a state of intoxication. It was supposed that he had driven so fast and so badly as to occasion the overturning of the carriage. It seemed to have struck a large stone at the side of the road, and Eaton had been thrown out, and badly bruised in the fall.

After a lingering illness he once more stood on his feet; but the light of reason had gone for ever.

Years passed on. The gifted young lawyer was forgotten; but in the almshouse the children for many years both teased and feared a ruined man known as "foolish Ralph."

CHAPTER XXII.

WE come now to record the ending of a life differing widely from that of the good deacon.

Turner, who had at one time been in possession of so much of his neighbors' property, lost it all through the constant demands made upon it by his idle family. Even after he was almost beggared, they still wrung from him every ready penny, to put to a bad use. His limited means allowed him to buy only very bad whiskey, and that in small quantities. His bloated sons were always his most frequent customers. When he ventured to remonstrate with them, they poured forth a torrent of reproaches which he knew he too well merited. He writhed under his troubles, cursed his luck, cursed his sons, and cursed his Maker.

He struggled hard to get on his feet again, as he expressed it. He stinted his food, wore the cast-off clothes of his prodigal sons, and deprived himself of sleep to lay plans for improving his condition; but to no avail.

At length he grew so covetous and desperate that he robbed a man who took lodgings with him for a night. He was arrested and thrown into jail. Confinement had a most depressing effect upon the wretched man, and he was seized with a fever. In the delirium which followed, his ravings were so wild that the hardened inmates of the jail cowered in their cells at hearing them. At midnight, as at midday, he uttered the same demoniac mutterings, yells, and oaths, or broke forth in the hollow laugh of the maniac. Or if his utterances grew at all coherent, he was heard to defy the power of heaven and of hell, or to plead with some of the many whom he had ruined, soul and body,

not to give evidence against him at the bar of God.

At last the fever left him; but there were no rallying powers. His own testimony was given respecting himself, as reason brightened for a moment: "I bartered my soul for money, and lost both. I can almost feel the everlasting flames that are soon to fasten upon me."

These were his last intelligible words.

With the rehearsal of this dreadful life and death we close our story. Let all who traffic in intoxicating liquors remember that they are the slayers of both the bodies and souls of men. If any of our readers think the picture overdrawn, let them candidly answer this question: Can any one portray the remorse and misery of that soul that feels that it is lost for ever?

We cannot be too earnest in seeking to arrest the evils that are daily recurring. So long as intoxicating liquor is dealt out as a

beverage, so long will wives and children suffer. And just so long, too, will there be new-made drunkards' graves.

One poor inebriate steps suddenly out of this world into the next; we scarcely give the occurrence a thought. We see another staggering through our streets, going the same way; yet he receives no word of admonition or remonstrance from us. We pass on the other side, as if shunning pollution, and that soul for whom Christ died we think not worth an effort of ours to save. Oh, are we not, in a slight degree at least, our brother's keeper? and are we not, as Christians, to be harvesters in the field of the world? But will not some of us come up empty-handed before God, or with only an ear or two gleaned here and there at long intervals in our selfish lives?

Oh, you who have time and influence, on you, more than on others, rests the blood of souls. But let no one hide behind a breast-

work of excuses, for all have work to do. This thought has led me to write this story. I would now send it out into the world, and by what I have endeavored to picture—the happiness and prosperity of the temperate and God-fearing, the remorse of the guilty, the sufferings of the innocent who are the victims of unhappy connections, and the anticipated terrors of the judgment to come—I hope to turn at least one erring soul from the road that leads to eternal death to the path that leads to eternal life.

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